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WARREN TREADGOLD

Studies in Byzantine Cultural History

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WARREN TREADGOLD

Studies in Byzantine Cultural History

Edited by

Bogdan-Petru MALEON and Anda-Elena MALEON

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EDITURA ACADEMIEI ROMÂNE

MUZEUL BRĂILEI „CAROL I"
EDITURA ISTROS

București – Brăila
2015

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Tel./Fax 0339401002; 0339401003
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Descrierea CIP a Bibliotecii Naţionale a României
TREADGOLD, WARREN
Studies in Byzantine Cultural History / Warren Treadgold; ed. Bogdan-Petru Maleon, Anda-Elena Maleon – Bucureşti: Editura Academiei Române; Brăila: Editura Istros a Muzeului Brăilei "Carol I", 2015.
ISBN 978-973-27-2589-4
ISBN 978-606-654-169-5

I. Maleon, Bogdan-Petru (ed.)
II. Maleon, Anda-Elena (ed.)

94(495.02)
008(495.02)

Cover: Irina Andreescu-Treadgold
Cover illustration front: *Ravenna, San Vitale, Young Lady in Theodora's Retinue, probably Joannina*

Tipar: S.C. PAPER PRINT INVEST S.A.
Brăila, Şos. Baldovineşti nr. 20 Tel./Fax: 0239 610 210
e-mail: paper_printinvest@yahoo.com

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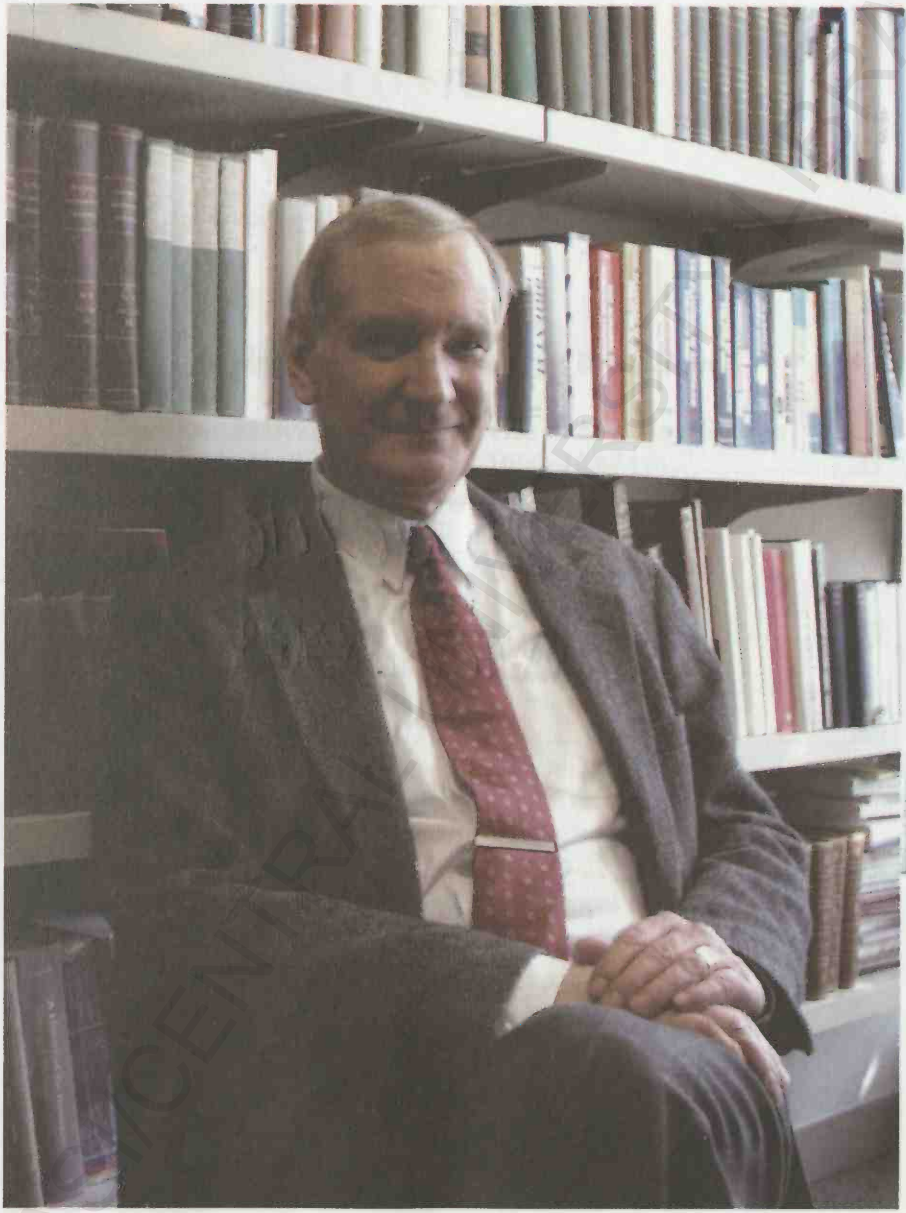

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WARREN TREADGOLD: PROFILE OF AN HISTORIAN

Professor Warren Treadgold is one of the leading Byzantine historians who have managed to unite the labor of thorough research with the vocation of synthesis. He obtained his A.B. from Harvard University in 1970 and Ph.D. from the same university in 1977. He has held an Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship at Munich (1978-1980) and Berlin (1982-1983), and visiting fellowships at All Souls College, Oxford (1988-1989) and at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars at Washington D. C. (1996-1997). He has taught at the University of California at Los Angeles (1977-1978), Stanford University (1980-1982), Hillsdale College (1983-1988), the University of California at Berkeley (1986), Florida International University at Miami (1988-1997) and Saint Louis University in Saint Louis (up to the present).

Since the beginning of his career, Professor Treadgold has been interested in numerous aspects of Byzantine civilization, and has focused his interest on several topics related to the political, economic, military, social, and cultural history of the Byzantine Empire (285-1461). His dissertation and first monograph, dedicated to one of the great literary monuments of the middle period of the Empire, was *The Nature of the Bibliotheca of Photius* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1980).

He has also been interested in economics, as in *The Byzantine State Finances in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries* (New York: East European Monographs, 1982), and has focused on some obscure periods of Byzantine history in an effort to understand how the state faced a series of crises, as in *The Byzantine Revival, 780-842* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988). This research persuaded him that there was a strong relationship between the Byzantine state's resources and its capacity to protect its territory and inhabitants. A comprehensive approach has guided his research in the field of military history, to which he has devoted several studies, especially on the recruitment, organization, and payment of the army. The principal result of this research was the book *Byzantium and Its Army, 284-1081* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

In the middle of his career as an historian, Professor Treadgold produced a panorama of Byzantine history in the massive volume *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press,

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1997), followed by *A Concise History of Byzantium* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

Throughout his career, Professor Treadgold has been concerned with aspects of Byzantine culture, especially with Byzantine historiography, beginning with the edited volume *Renaissances Before the Renaissance: Cultural Revivals of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984). More recently, he has been writing a three-volume synthesis on Byzantine historiography, beginning with *The Early Byzantine Historians* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) and *The Middle Byzantine Historians* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, November 2013); the trilogy will eventually be completed by a volume on the later Byzantine historians. As background for these books, he has written articles giving special attention to the life, career, and works of less-known authors of histories that have been lost in their original form, such as Olympiodorus of Thebes, Nicetas the Paphlagonian, Eustathius of Epiphania, and Trajan the Patrician.

The historian's diversity and complexity are also revealed by the courses that he has taught over time: *The Byzantine Empire*, *Medieval History to 1100*, *Ancient Greece*, *Ancient and Medieval People*, *Introduction to Byzantine History*, *The Byzantine Historians*, *Byzantine-Western Relations*, and *Late Antiquity*.

Professor Treadgold has published his studies in a variety of journals, such as *International History Review*, *Revue des études byzantines*, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici*, *Rivista di Bizantinistica*, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, *Byzantinische Forschungen*, *Byzantinoslavica*, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, *American Historical Review*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, and *Byzantion*.

*

The present volume, *Studies in Byzantine Cultural History*, gathers 21 studies that Professor Treadgold has published in different journals and in edited volumes published by international institutions. He has directed his research towards political and military history, but has also included a series of themes on social history and daily life. One notes his interest in controversial topics, as he tries in his research to refute some widely accepted views about Byzantine history.

The papers in the first section of the present volume focus on modern interpretations of Byzantine history and are listed in the order that they were originally published (*The Break in Byzantium and the Gap in Byzantine*

Studies, Numismatics and the Ripening of Byzantine Studies, Imaginary Early Christianity, Taking Sources on Their Own Terms and on Ours: Peter Brown's Late Antiquity, Why Write a New History of Byzantium?, Late Ancient and Byzantine History Today, Byzantine Exceptionalism and Some Recent Books on Byzantium).

The studies in the second section deal with various controversial issues in Byzantine historiography, as the author seeks to correct some erroneous interpretations (*The Diplomatic Career and Historical Work of Olympiodorus of Thebes, The Byzantine World Histories of John Malalas and Eustathius of Epiphania, Procopius and the Imperial Panels of San Vitale, Trajan the Patrician, Nicephorus, and Theophanes, The Lost Secret History of Nicetas the Paphlagonian*).

The last section of the volume refers to features of Byzantine culture, and particularly to the connections between culture and society, politics, institutions, and the economy (*The Revival of Byzantine Learning and the Revival of the Byzantine State, The Bride-Shows of the Byzantine Emperors, Between Social and Political History: Byzantine Prophecies, Statistics, and Bride-Shows, Predicting the Accession of Theodosius I, The Prophecies of the Patriarch Methodius, Standardized Numbers in the Byzantine Army, The Historicity of Imperial Bride-Shows, Byzantium, the Reluctant Warrior, The Formation of a Byzantine Identity*).

Bogdan-Petru MALEON

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Introduction

This collection includes twenty-one of my more theoretical papers on Byzantium, leaving aside my more technical papers, perhaps for another volume. Although the present studies were written for different purposes over a period of thirty-five years, most of them reflect the principle that cultural, social, political, military, and economic history should be complementary, not separate fields to be studied separately. In scholarship specialization is often a necessity (because no one can know everything) but never a virtue. One of the worst mistakes a scholar can make is to reach a general conclusion that seems consistent with several isolated pieces of evidence but is incompatible with the evidence as a whole. While such mistakes can result from excessive specialization alone, more often they depend on false preconceptions, derived either from a modern ideology like postmodernism, Marxism, or feminism, or simply from a failure to understand how other people, in this case the Byzantines, could think and do things that are very different from what we may consider natural and rational. From a modern point of view, Byzantine culture can seem very strange.

Many modern scholars have either ignored the evidence that seems strange to them or dismissed it on the assumption that the Byzantines invented it. Yet our strangest evidence about Byzantium is often our best guide to the distinctive characteristics of Byzantine culture. This is true even if the strange evidence is factually wrong, because the fact that the Byzantines either invented or mistakenly believed something that seems strange to us shows a significant difference between our culture and theirs. For instance, even the most sophisticated Byzantines, like Procopius of Caesarea, often attributed events that they could not explain otherwise, including plagues and other disasters, to the intervention of demons[1]. Modern scholars, who naturally look for other explanations of such events, should still realize that the overwhelming majority of Byzantines believed in demons, and in magic and prophecies produced by demons. Similarly, when the behavior of the Byzantines seems strange to us, we should consider the possibility that their seemingly strange actions were the result of their seemingly strange beliefs.

To take an example not discussed in this book, two sources record that in 1014 Basil II blinded either 14,000 or "around 15,000" Bulgarian

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[1] On Procopius' belief in demons, see Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 210-12 and 222-25.

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prisoners of war, leaving one in every hundred with a single eye to guide the others home. Several historians have recently rejected this account, calling it "a fantasy" or "a story … which had been modified and exaggerated in the retelling" over as many as eighty years[2]. But the slight difference between the 14,000 and "around 15,000" prisoners blinded by Basil actually supports the figures' reliability by showing their independence of each other, and though the source that mentions the latter number wrote around 1095, he summarized a source who wrote around 1027, just thirteen years after the event[3]. Nobody seems to have questioned a report by Anna Comnena that in 1091 the Byzantines killed tens of thousands of Pecheneg prisoners of war[4]. The thinking behind modern appraisals of such evidence is apparently that a mass execution of prisoners might be an acceptable necessity, but a mass blinding must be an unacceptable and incredible "atrocity"[5].

The Byzantines would however have had the opposite reaction. To them, mutilation was much more merciful than killing, which (unlike mutilation) the Ten Commandments explicitly forbade. The emperor Leo III (717-41) thought he was showing Christian mercy in his *Ecloga* when he replaced execution with mutilation as the punishment for various crimes. Again and again in Byzantine history, rebels, conspirators, and deposed emperors were mutilated, usually blinded, but in most cases not killed. Faced with thousands of prisoners too difficult and dangerous to hold for long but likely to fight against Byzantium again if released, Basil II avoided killing them in cold blood but achieved the same objectives he could have attained by killing them: the Bulgarian emperor Samuel died of shock, the Bulgarian army was crippled, and the Bulgarians were driven to total surrender within

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[2] Mark Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025* (Macmillan, 1996), pp. 387-88 ("a fantasy"), followed by Paul Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900-1204* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 72-73 and *idem*, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 4 ("a story …"), and Catherine Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976-1025)* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 154-55.

[3] See Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 329-39 (on John Scylitzes) and 247-58 (on Scylitzes' source, evidently the lost history of Theodore of Sebastea).

[4] Anna Comnena, *Alexiad* VII.6.1-2. On the other hand, we may reasonably suspect Anna of exaggerating her father's achievement and mercy when she adds that the prisoners outnumbered the Byzantines guarding them by thirty to one and were killed contrary to Alexius' wishes; cf. Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 374 and n. 158 and 382 and n. 203.

[5] Whittow, *Making*, p. 388 ("Had Basil committed this atrocity …").

four years. The Byzantines would have been astonished to learn that in America capital punishment is legal while judicial mutilation is not.

Any argument that our sources are wrong also requires us to explain why they either chose to be deceptive or were misled. In this example, even if the Byzantines had thought mass blinding was an atrocity, what possible motive could our sources have for inventing an atrocity as part of an account that is otherwise very favorable to Basil II? Besides, to argue for the falsity of anything attested by two or more apparently independent sources requires a demonstration that they actually depend on a single source with a reason for deception or error. Conversely, however, if a source did have an obvious reason to deceive or to be deceived, his testimony is indeed suspect and quite possibly false. Prime examples are the authors of panegyrics or hagiography, who were supposed to praise their subjects regardless of their merits, and careless or poorly educated writers, who were often uncritical and ready to invent information in the hope of gaining a reputation for erudition. Yet such texts may well persuade modern scholars, for several reasons. Out of misplaced advocacy for the Byzantine field, they may be eager to defend any Byzantine author against any criticism; out of hostility to "elitism", they may want to defend a supposedly "popular" writer like John Malalas by denying his carelessness and deceit; or, fashionably assuming that history is nothing more than a "text", they may conclude that most Byzantines must really have idolized their rulers and holy men, merely because panegyrics and hagiography idealize them.

The ideas of most Byzantines that differed from those of many modern scholars were numerous and important, and only some of them are discussed in this book. To begin with, most Byzantines, unlike most modern scholars, thought that God existed and was of overriding importance, and that sexuality was distasteful and unimportant in itself. The Byzantine Christian tradition assumed that doing something necessary, like killing an enemy soldier in battle, could still be sinful and require penance; but most modern scholars assume, with the Western Christian tradition, that no one can be blamed for doing something necessary. Similarly, when the Western Church granted a dispensation for acts that would otherwise be forbidden, like marrying a close relative, it declared the dispensed act sinless; but when the Byzantine Church granted such a dispensation it still considered the dispensed act tainted. Most Byzantines appear to have attached less importance than Westerners did to such things as the virtues of resignation and humility, the sanctity of oaths and avoiding deception, and originality in art and literature. Unlike many modern scholars, most Byzantines also had little interest in matters of race, class, or gender. We hardly ever find Byzantines cooperating

out of a shared identity as Greeks, Armenians, aristocrats, peasants, women, or eunuchs, though we often find Byzantines cooperating out of shared religious beliefs, family loyalties, or even enthusiasm for their chariot-racing teams. This list of Byzantine peculiarities could be lengthened considerably.

The distinctive features of Byzantine culture, while not the only subject of the papers collected here, are a recurring theme in most of them. Though I wrote most of these papers while working on one of my books, in the books themselves I usually tried to devote as little space as possible to arguing against previous interpretations, on the principle that the books' subject was Byzantium itself rather than modern scholarship about it. Naturally in my books I often drew on the work of other scholars, and when I thought it was correct, I simply incorporated it into my text and cited it in a footnote, like the material in Byzantine sources that I thought was reliable. When I believed modern scholars or Byzantine sources were mistaken or misleading on minor points for straightforward reasons, a longer footnote usually sufficed. The hard cases, in which I believed that something important had gone wrong in modern scholarship, or that a Byzantine source was seriously deceived or deceptive, were typically what led me to write the sort of article that I have included in the present collection. The biggest problems led me to write more general papers, some of which I delivered as lectures. All these papers appear nearly in the form in which they were written, to the point of retaining the different forms of bibliographical references used by the original publications. I have, however, silently corrected a few misprints and added a few notes in square brackets that either correct erroneous or outdated statements or add references to books or articles that have appeared since the original papers were published.

The papers in the first section of this book, on modern interpretations of Byzantium, appear in approximately the order in which they were originally written. The first, "The Break in Byzantium and the Gap in Byzantine Studies", disputes the thesis of "discontinuity" between Byzantium and the ancient world postulated thirty to sixty years ago by several scholars, especially the deservedly influential Alexander Kazhdan. The second paper, "Numismatics and the Ripening of Byzantine Studies", not previously published because the journal that had requested it ceased publication, is a review article on Michael Hendy's important *Studies on the Byzantine Monetary Economy*. The next two papers, "Imaginary Early Christianity" and "Taking Sources on Their Own Terms and on Ours: Peter Brown's Late Antiquity", are critiques of postmodernist ideas about late ancient culture. *Why Write a New History of Byzantium?*, a lecture originally given at the University of Toronto and then published as a pamphlet that is now difficult

to find, discusses my reasons for writing my *History of the Byzantine State and Society*. The last two papers, "Late Ancient and Byzantine History Today" and "Byzantine Exceptionalism and Some Recent Books on Byzantium", are review articles on the state of the Byzantine field in the early twenty-first century.

The papers in the second section deal with problems in Byzantine historiography, particularly with historical texts of anomalous sorts. Here the articles appear roughly in the order in which the historians wrote. "The Diplomatic Career and Historical Work of Olympiodorus of Thebes" concerns a text by a pagan in the service of the Christian emperor Theodosius II that I believe was more an internal government report than a formal history. "The Byzantine World Histories of John Malalas and Eustathius of Epiphania" argues that Malalas' supposedly popularizing history was largely plagiarized from a lost classicizing history by Eustathius, to which Malalas added false information and fabricated source citations in an attempt to disguise his plagiarism. "Procopius and the Imperial Panels of San Vitale", jointly authored with my wife, the art historian Irina Andreescu-Treadgold, uses the text of Procopius' *Secret History* to propose that these mosaics commemorated a projected marriage alliance between Justinian and Theodora and their general Belisarius and his wife, which was more advantageous for Belisarius than Procopius implies. "Trajan the Patrician, Nicephorus, and Theophanes" attempts to reconstruct from the histories of Nicephorus and Theophanes the lost history of Trajan, a moralizing historian hostile to Monotheletes and the emperor Justinian II. Finally, "The Lost *Secret History* of Nicetas the Paphlagonian" tries to reconstruct the lost but influential history of Nicetas, who disliked the Patriarch Photius, the emperor Leo VI, and most other leaders of the Byzantine Church and state in the ninth and early tenth centuries.

The final section of the book is about the characteristics of Byzantine culture, and especially connections between that culture and society, politics, institutions, and the economy. The order is again roughly that in which the papers were written. The first study, "The Revival of Byzantine Learning and the Revival of the Byzantine State", suggests that the recovery of Byzantine culture that began in the late eighth century contributed significantly to the economic and military recovery of Byzantium in the ninth century. The second study, "The Bride-Shows of the Byzantine Emperors", describes the curious practice of selecting the brides of Byzantine emperors in the eighth and ninth centuries by means of a competition among beautiful women, maintaining that it was certainly historical because seven independent sources attest it. This article provoked a dispute in which a half-dozen scholars

insisted that the custom must be fictional, on the apparent assumption that nothing so bizarre could possibly be true and that I was improperly introducing into political history a motif that belonged only to cultural history.

That controversy was one reason I delivered a lecture at the universities of Toronto and Oxford entitled, "Between Social and Political History: Byzantine Prophecies, Statistics, and Bride-Shows". This lecture had four parts, later published in expanded form as separate articles that can now be read together here, prefaced by the previously unpublished introduction and conclusion to my original lecture. The first part, "Predicting the Accession of Theodosius I", contends that in 379 the Western Roman emperor Gratian selected Theodosius I as Eastern emperor mostly because a prophecy in 372 had predicted that the name of the next Eastern emperor would begin with the letters THEOD. The second part, "The Prophecies of the Patriarch Methodius", attributes to the future iconophile patriarch Methodius I (843-47) prophecies of the deaths of the iconoclast emperors Leo V, Michael II, and Theophilus, and suggests that one of these prophecies inspired Photius to make a prophecy about Basil I. The third part, "Standardized Numbers in the Byzantine Army", argues that for reasons of efficiency the Byzantines, like the Romans before them, preferred to use round and standardized numbers for their military units, salaries, and allowances, though some modern scholars have considered such roundness a reason for doubting the numbers. The final part, "The Historicity of Imperial Bride-Shows", defends my previous article on the bride-shows against its critics. As far as I know, since these four articles were published in 2004 and 2005 no further criticisms of their arguments have appeared.

The last two papers, which deal with more general problems, were originally delivered as keynote lectures at conferences at the University of British Columbia and The Ohio State University, and were then published among the conference papers. "Byzantium, the Reluctant Warrior" may be a somewhat misleading title for the first paper, because it argues not just that the Byzantines were reluctant to fight foreign wars but that they were much less reluctant to fight civil wars among themselves, apparently because the rewards for the victors were greater in civil wars than in foreign wars. The second paper, "The Formation of a Byzantine Identity", presents a case that between 600 and 800 Byzantium acquired a more self-conscious identity as an overwhelmingly Greek-speaking and orthodox Christian state. This heightened sense of identity appears to have made the Byzantines less willing than earlier Romans had been to undertake foreign conquests and missionary activity, but also made the Byzantines somewhat better able to defend themselves and their faith against others.

Whether I shall ever write a systematic general book on Byzantine culture I am not sure. Several books of that sort already exist, including good ones by Herbert Hunger, Alexander Kazhdan, and Cyril Mango[6]. Some of what I have to add is already in the present book, and to write a truly comprehensive history of Byzantine culture would be a Herculean task. Of course Byzantine culture can be studied not just as a whole but in parts, and most of its parts could still benefit from more thorough treatment. My own project on the Byzantine historians is still in progress, with two of three projected volumes already published and the third begun. Though historiography was a major part of Byzantine literature, it was only one part, and sadly Kazhdan died after writing only the volumes of his general history of Byzantine literature that cover the period from 650 to 1000[7]. Even the whole of Byzantine literature is only part of our evidence for Byzantine culture, along with art, architecture, archeology, and the continuing traditions of Eastern Christianity, on all of which general works remain few[8]. As I have argued in several of the papers collected here, in some ways recent scholarship on Byzantium has actually become an obstacle to understanding Byzantine culture, since postmodernist and Marxist ideology are quite foreign to Byzantine thinking, and postmodernists and Marxists have worked not so much to explain that thinking as to explain it away. This at least is a mistake that I have tried to avoid in the papers that follow[9].

W. T.
November 2015

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[6] Herbert Hunger, *Reich der neuen Mitte: Der christliche Geist der byzantinischen Kultur* (Graz, 1965), Alexander Kazhdan, *Византийска култура* (Moscow, 1968), translated into German as *Byzanz und seine Kultur* (Berlin, 1973), and Cyril Mango, *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome* (London, 1980).

[7] Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650-850)* (Athens, 1999) and *idem*, *A History of Byzantine Literature (850-1000)* (Athens, 2006).

[8] I may be at some disadvantage in having (unlike Kazhdan and Mango) no personal connection with the Eastern tradition (except by my marriage); yet I may also enjoy some advantages, by finding it easier to keep a certain detachment from the subject of my research.

[9] My best thanks go to Professor Victor Spinei for arranging the publication of this volume, to Professor Bogdan-Petru Maleon and Anda-Elena Maleon for their careful efforts in producing it, and to my wife, Irina Andreescu-Treadgold, for her help with the illustrations.

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I. Modern Interpretations of Byzantium

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THE BREAK IN BYZANTIUM AND THE GAP IN BYZANTINE STUDIES

Until around 1955, nearly every Byzantine specialist agreed that the Byzantine Empire was a continuation of the ancient world. After all, no very sharp break occurred in 330 A.D., when Constantinople was inaugurated. To be sure, this date roughly coincided with a shift in power within the Roman Empire from the Latin-speaking West to the Greek-speaking East, with the emperors' adoption of Christianity, and with a major increase in the size of the Empire's army and bureaucracy; but none of these changes seemed in itself to mark the end of Antiquity. Otherwise, the Empire was said to have remained largely as it had been before, and to have retained the main elements of ancient civilization – in particular important cities, a monetary economy, and a high level of education. Over its history of more than a thousand years Byzantium naturally underwent more changes, including great losses of territory; but on the whole the Empire was thought to have kept the same sort of civilization until it fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. It would follow that from 330 to 1453 there was no really crucial break in Byzantine history[1].

Such was the consensus of scholars up to the middle 1950s. It remains the view of our standard history of Byzantium, the late George Ostrogorsky's *History of the Byzantine State*. But Ostrogorsky's book originally appeared in 1940, and its only thorough revision dates from 1952. Since that time the consensus that Byzantium continued Antiquity has gradually weakened as specialized studies have challenged parts of it. Some historians have argued from archeological evidence that in the seventh century invasions by Persians, Arabs, and Slavs severely disrupted the life of Byzantine cities, which did not recover for some 400 years. Others, pursuing Ostrogorsky's argument that the invasions broke up many large agricultural estates, have gone on to conclude (as Ostrogorsky did not) that the invasions also destroyed the Empire's landed aristocracy and class system. Still others have conjectured from the fact that very few literary works were written in the seventh and eighth centuries that the Empire's educational system broke down at that time. Numismatic

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[1] This article was written in the course of my work on a new general history of Byzantium, now published as *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford, 1997). My special thanks go to Professor Alexander Kazhdan, who after reading an earlier draft of this paper generously helped me to improve arguments that are not only contrary to his own views but specifically designed to refute them!

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evidence has led others to believe that in the seventh century coins became so rare that the empire could no longer have had a monetary economy of any consequence. All these ideas have continued to win adherents, despite strong opposition from Ostrogorsky and other traditionalists.

These arguments have also clashed with other sorts of objections to the traditional consensus. For example, some historians have argued that Ostrogorsky was wrong about the great reduction in large estates in the seventh century, so that the essential structure of rural society survived the invasions. If this is correct, a drastic disruption of urban life looks less plausible, since it is hard to see how the invasions could have affected the walled cities more than the undefended countryside. Others have argued that Ostrogorsky was wrong about still another point, when he maintained that in the seventh century the Empire stopped paying its soldiers a living wage and instead endowed them with grants of land. Many now think that this change was completed as many as 300 years later, and if this is so coins were widely used, at least for paying the army, well past the seventh century. Most of the disputants, however, have concentrated only on their chosen subject, ignoring any contradictions that followed from their conclusions.

At length several scholars have made a welcome effort to treat most of these problems together as one problem, which they call the problem of continuity: that is, did Byzantium continue through the seventh-century invasions to be essentially the same society, or did it become a basically different society? Recently, responding to the multiplying arguments in favor of the discontinuity of Byzantium before and after the seventh century, Günter Weiss has explicitly set down the arguments in favor of the traditional position, which he defined in his conclusion: "Byzantine society remained fundamentally the society of Late Antiquity. This proposition finds its confirmation in the areas of cultural life and political structure[2]. Ostrogorsky would have had no objection to this.

Even more recently, Alexander Kazhdan and Anthony Cutler have taken issue with Weiss, and defined what they mean by discontinuity:

> By the seventh century the city had collapsed, taking with it ancient social gradations, traditional forms of dependence, the active circulation of money, clan links, "open" everyday life [i.e., life lived in urban public places], schooling, and the theater. A new society

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[2] Günter Weiss, "Antike und Byzanz. Die Kontinuität der Gesellschaftsstruktur", *Historische Zeitschrift* 224 (1977), pp. 529-560 (quotation from p. 560).

> was born based primarily on the countryside, a society in which simpler social groupings functioned, namely a broad stratum of free laborers opposed to the social elite concentrated about the capital and the throne[3].

Ostrogorsky would not have rejected all of this, since he did believe that in the seventh century there was a shift from large landholdings to the smallholdings of the "free laborers" mentioned by Kazhdan and Cutler. But Ostrogorsky would have disagreed with them about the collapse of the city and monetary economy; and though he was much less interested in everyday life than Kazhdan and Cutler are, he would not have been likely to share their view that Byzantine society changed so dramatically during the seventh century.

Kazhdan and Cutler observe that "Weiss's predecessors regarded the idea of continuity as an axiomatic and a priori statement", and this is undoubtedly true of most general work on Byzantium[4]. But most of the work done on Byzantium has not been general, and has not required its authors to take even an implicit position on the question of Byzantine continuity. Many of the positions taken in the controversies about the seventh century are entirely consistent with a belief in the discontinuity of Byzantine history, and Kazhdan and Cutler quite reasonably use them to support that view. Beyond this, an examination of the Byzantine field will show that in practice most Byzantinists have been choosing their subjects as if Byzantine history were discontinuous. For the Byzantine field is not like most other established disciplines, with a considerable body of scholars who work on its central part and fewer scholars working toward the edges. It is more like two separate fields with a hole in between.

Since today we like numbers – and I like them as much as the next scholar – I recently compiled some statistics while I was looking over the past twenty years of book reviews in the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift.* I classified the books reviewed, which include most books that are of Byzantine interest, by their main chronological category. I counted those from the fourth to the seventh century as "early", those from the eighth to the eleventh century as

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[3] Alexander Kazhdan and Anthony Cutler, "Continuity and Discontinuity in Byzantine History", *Byzantion* 52 (1982), pp.429-478 (quotation from p. 477), hereafter cited as "Kazhdan and Cutler". Here I intend to follow their laudable example of keeping references to a minimum, so as not to "drown the logic of argumentation in the water of footnotes" (p. 429 n. 1).

[4] Kazhdan and Cutler, p. 430.

"middle", and those from the twelfth to the fifteenth century as "late", leaving those that did not fit within these chronological borders in a "general" category. This classification meant that the three chronological categories each covered about the same number of years, and also that the division between the first two corresponded to the most controversial point, the seventh century. The results appear in the following table.

Table: Books reviewed in the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift,* 1966-1985

Main Subject	1966-70	1971-75	1976-80	1981-85	Total
4th to 7th cents.	87(42%)	79(38%)	97(37%)	89(35%)	352(38%)
8th to 11th cents.	24(11%)	25(12%)	28(11%)	35(14%)	112(12%)
12th to 15th cents.	56(27%)	58 (28%)	74(28%)	72 (28%)	260(28%)
General	42(20%)	44(21%)	66(25%)	60(23%)	212(23%)
Total	209	206	265	256	936

Of this sample of nearly a thousand books, 38% fell into the "early" period, only 12% into the "middle" period, and 28% into the "late" period; 23% were left in the "general" category. Admittedly, a few of the assignments of books to different categories are disputable, and some allowance must be made for editorial decisions by the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift;* but it is interesting that the percentages remain quite stable over the years, despite several changes of editor.

These figures in any case reflect what most people familiar with the Byzantine field already know from reading books and articles and attending conferences. The early Byzantine period, or "Late Antiquity", is much the best developed part of Byzantine studies, with a large secondary literature which covers not only political history but social, economic, art, and literary history, and includes general syntheses as well. Next in order of development, a considerable distance behind, is the late period, which is less well surveyed but is still covered by a nearly continuous series of recent monographs, which give a good deal of attention to society, economics, art, and literature. The middle Byzantine period comes a very poor third, treated by monographs that are often seventy or more years old and that leave important gaps in political history and gaping chasms in social and economic history; art and literature are a good deal better covered, and in fact account for most of the books on this period in my table. The disparity of coverage of these periods seems to have little to do with how much source material is available: the early period is on the whole the worst documented of the three, but it is studied most. The main reason for the disparity, without much doubt, is that early Byzantium has benefited from the attention of Classicists, while late Byzantium has

received the attention of western medievalists and Slavicists. Middle Byzantine studies must mainly rely for support on the earlier part of the western medieval field, which is itself rather poorly developed.

This break in the study of Byzantine history is not necessarily a problem if it represents a real and radical break between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages in the history of the Greek East. In that case, perhaps Byzantium is not a very useful concept. It is, of course, a modern concept anyway. Still, the fact that the Byzantine state was in every legal and technical sense a continuation of the Roman Empire should give those who would divide it at the seventh century some pause. It is also striking that those who reject the continuity of Byzantine civilization happen to be arguing that Byzantium changed drastically at just the beginning and end of the period we know least about. Kazhdan and Cutler warn against considering only "the extreme points" – their term for the sixth and eleventh centuries – and neglecting "the gap between the extremes". If we do this, they point out, we might assume that because Byzantium had important urban life, patterns of large landownership and peasant dependence, vital and creative art and literature, and so on both before and after the gap, it had continued to have them in between[5]. Without further proof, such an assumption would certainly be dangerous. On the other hand, since this supposed "gap" has been studied so little, neither would it be safe to assume without proof that those things did not continue, especially because the few who have studied this period generally did believe that Byzantine civilization was continuous.

A related problem is that most of those who postulate a sharp break at the seventh century – and more gradual change in the eleventh leading up to the twelfth – are by no means equally familiar with all three periods of Byzantine history. No one is on completely secure ground here. Though Kazhdan and Cutler know about as much as anyone, their published work has been primarily on the late period, secondarily on the middle period, and only incidentally on the early period – as was the case with Ostrogorsky, one might add. (Here I should also confess that my own published work is to date almost exclusively on the middle period, though like Cutler and Ostrogorsky I was trained as a Classicist.) The problem goes deeper than simple lack of expertise or knowledge. Even those who know a good deal about both the early and middle periods must struggle with the disadvantage that virtually all previous work on each period has been done without regard for the other. Comparing the early and middle Byzantine Empire on an equal footing is at best difficult

[5] Kazhdan and Cutler, pp. 435 and 452.

and in the present state of our knowledge partly impossible; but the majority of those trying to make the comparison seem not to be aware of the difficulty.

Let me give two specific examples here of what seem to me errors that result from the seventh-century break in Byzantine studies. I have chosen them not as particularly egregious cases but because they are quite recent and represent attempts to compare the situation before the seventh century with that after the seventh century. Each is thoroughly up to date in its interest in mentalities; and, as studies of pre-modern mentalities often are, each begins with close study of a single text, from which broad generalizations are then made. Such a practice, fairly safe when the basic facts of a period are well established, is particularly dangerous in making judgments about this problematic turning point.

The first is an article by Sabine MacCormack based on Cosmas Indicopleustes, the sixth-century Byzantine who expressed his bizarre views on Christianity and the universe in his *Christian Topography.* At a key point of her argument MacCormack states:

> ...According to Cosmas, prophecy ended with John [in Apocalypse]: there can be no more of it. ... Firstly, therefore, nothing new can happen in history henceforth, and secondly, there is no room for political protest. For prophecy, itself one of the chief vehicles for protest in the ancient world, had "officially" come to an end, and quite apart from that, to protest against the empire which is the minister of Christ's dispensations would be impious. Students of Byzantium will here recognize an attitude which recurs throughout Byzantine history until the fall of Constantinople: namely, Byzantine political theory had no room for a fully worked out theory of resistance to political authority[6].

My problem here is not with the views attributed to Cosmas but with the conclusions that the author draws from them. From what she says, one would hardly guess that, as Peter Brown has put it, "Political prophecies by holy men are particularly rife in the literature of the eighth and ninth centuries"[7]. Most of these prophecies embodied political protests. For

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[6] Sabine MacCormack, "Christ and Empire, Time and Ceremonial in Sixth Century Byzantium and Beyond", *Byzantion* 52 (1982), pp.285-309 (quotation from p. 297).

[7] Peter Brown, "A Dark Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy", in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1982), p.299. This

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example, the ninth century Patriarch Methodius, to judge from his own writings, composed not one but three prophetic pamphlets before he became Patriarch, prophesying the deaths of three emperors whose theological views he opposed. Two of the emperors, not surprisingly, jailed him, but Methodius outlived them all and saw their beliefs condemned at a council over which he himself presided[8]. Prophecies and protests against rulers continued to be common long after the seventh century, though of course to overthrow the whole system of the Roman Empire had been out of the question since the first century A.D. If Cosmas expected the future to be a time of unchanging respect for authority, he was wrong. But his view seems to have corresponded well enough to the modern stereotype of the traditionalistic Byzantine to deceive not only MacCormack but also two highly distinguished authorities on Late Antiquity whom she thanks for their comments on an earlier draft of her article[9].

Moving to the period just after the seventh century, I would cite a recent book by the French Byzantinist Gilbert Dagron in which he comments on the so-called *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai,* or *Brief Historical Notes.* This peculiar text, which he dates to the mid-eighth century, describes the monuments of Constantinople, and purports to be a collaborative effort by a group of cultured officials. As Dagron amply demonstrates, it is a mass of errors, distorting history, misdating buildings, and misidentifying statues, repeatedly citing authorities who either cannot have existed or cannot have written what is attributed to them. (Herodotus, for example, is cited as a source for the reign of Constantine.) Dagron concludes, "About 750, an historian, and all the more a simple onlooker who asked about history, doubtless no longer had direct access to writers before the sixth century"[10].

Though Dagron's description of this text is accurate, his conclusion does not follow. Around 750, and later, any serious "historian" at Constantinople had access to excellent literary sources for ancient history,

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essay was originally published in the *English Historical Review* 88 (1973), pp. 1-34. On Byzantine prophecy, now see especially Paul Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkeley, 1985).

[8] See Jean Gouillard, "Une Oeuvre inédite du patriarche Méthode", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 53 (1960), pp.36-46, especially p.39, and the discussion of these prophecies in Warren Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival* (Stanford, 1988), pp. 276- 78 and n.383. [Now see also Study 17 in this book.]

[9] Arnaldo Momigliano and Averil Cameron; MacCormack, "Christ and Empire", initial note on p. 285.

[10] Gilbert Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire* (Paris, 1984), pp. 37-38.

including many that are lost today, as several compilations made in the ninth and tenth centuries prove. After all, the works of most ancient historians have been transmitted to us in middle Byzantine manuscripts. The authors studied by Dagron (if they are not in fact a single author posing as several) were quite simply charlatans, who chose to make up their research rather than to do it. Nor were such works of fraudulent learning unique to middle Byzantium. We can find several dating from Late Antiquity, of which perhaps the most notorious is the *Historia Augusta,* a set of Latin biographies of the emperors of the second and third centuries. It too is attributed to a panel of learned collaborators and is a mass of errors supported by forged references; yet it purports to have been written in the early fourth century and is probably not more than a century later. Among such works in Greek we might well count Cosmas Indicopleustes, who piles up geographical and astronomical absurdities to prove that the world is shaped like the Temple of Solomon. More such works are now lost, such as four by a writer of the fifth to sixth centuries, Damascius of Damascus, on various supposedly factual marvels. In the ninth century Photius read both Cosmas and Damascius and considered them utter rubbish, as any reasonably educated Byzantine would have considered the *Brief Historical Notes*[11]. Byzantium should no more be judged by them than Late Antiquity by the *Historia Augusta,* or contemporary America by the tales of extraterrestrial visitors and other *mirabilia* in the *National Enquirer.*

Dagron, most of whose previous work was on Late Antiquity, of course knew of the existence of the *Historia Augusta* and similar works; but evidently he thought that they were not typical of their times, while the *Brief Historical Notes* were typical of theirs. I see no difference, and I doubt that any important difference could be seriously argued. One could reasonably conclude that in both Late Antiquity and the middle Byzantine period most people were no scholars, and could read or listen to such stuff for diversion without knowing or much caring whether it was factual or not. But the stereotype about eighth-century Byzantines is that they were ignorant, and stereotypes tend to persist in little-studied fields until the research that can produce a more nuanced picture has been done and disseminated. In the remainder of this article I shall try to avoid such stereotypes and to suggest another way of looking at what happened to Byzantium in the seventh century.

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[11] See Photius, *Bibliotheca,* "codex" 36, 7b.6-39, and "codex" 130, 96b.36-97a.7.

Since the Byzantine city is central to the debate, I propose to begin with an exercise in comparative history that may throw some light on it. Because in the present state of scholarship we are poorly informed about the middle Byzantine city, let us take an example, from another historical context, of a city that seems to have most of the characteristics that the critics of Byzantine continuity would attribute to the middle Byzantine city. The advantage is that our model city has been more thoroughly studied and its relevant features are less disputed. I shall quote and summarize fairly recent studies of my middle-Byzantine-like city in such a way as temporarily to leave the city's identity aside – and also, I should note at once, to leave out the features that do not bear on the debate.

This city is the metropolis of a coastal area of about a thousand square miles, which contains a number of other settlements but no true city apart from this. Though the city has some share in shipping, it is located a short distance from the sea, out of easy reach of naval attacks. It is walled, and built around a fort on a height that can serve as protection against expected invaders. In topography the city resembles middle Byzantine Ephesus, Athens, or Corinth. If it were directly on the sea, it would resemble middle Byzantine Thessalonica, Trebizond, or Constantinople itself. If it were further inland, it would resemble middle Byzantine Ancyra, Amorium, or Adrianople. These were most of the largest middle Byzantine cities. Finally, like nearly all middle Byzantine cities but Constantinople, our model city has recently been rebuilt after being destroyed by foreign invaders.

To quote one specialist, "The whole area within the city walls is ... rather less than a square mile. It has been estimated that ... thirty per cent of this area was unoccupied. ... The 12,000 square meters of private housing and streets is broken down into 6,000 houses, each with six inhabitants, giving a city population of 36,000"[12]. This is a fairly typical size for a middle Byzantine city. Though the walled circuits of Constantinople and Thessalonica were considerably bigger, Dagron has quoted Cyril Mango's estimate that in the eighth century Constantinople had thirty to fifty thousand inhabitants, and Mango has estimated that not much later Amorium had some 20,000[13]. Despite our model city's links with the sea, "agriculture was the economic basis" of the city, as it served as a market for the surrounding

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[12] T. B. L. Webster, *Athenian Culture and Society* (Berkeley, 1973), pp. 39-40.

[13] Dagron, *Constantinople,* pp.6-7; Cyril Mango, "The Heir of Rome", in *The Dark Ages,* ed. David Talbot Rice (London, 1965), p. 112.

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region. Commerce and industry played a decidedly subordinate part[14]. Such was surely the case with middle Byzantine cities. As for daily life, "The mudbrick houses of the [people] rose beside their narrow, crooked streets and presented a bleak exterior to the passerby. Life centered around the open-air courtyard within ... Lunch was generally a family affair ... Evenings were spent quietly at home ..."[15]. In other words, we have here the analogue of the Byzantine house described by Kazhdan and Cutler, "in which the courtyard became the fulcrum of gravity and street space was reduced to a minimum", leaving "the exemplary member of the Byzantine family doomed to revolve within a closed and limited circle"[16]. In our model city, as in middle Byzantine cities, public baths played no significant role in social life[17].

What about education? In our model city "higher education in anything like the modern sense" was only very rarely available, "and then haphazardly." Probably "boys got far more education from [servant] and parents, from walks in the [market], from the cobbler, from the barber-shop, and from life on the farm than from school"[18]. As for books, "multiple copies" were virtually "unknown", as was a book trade. "The schoolmasters ... must somehow have been able to get texts for themselves, and their method was probably to find someone who had a text and copy it"[19]. This is very like the description of Byzantine education given by Kazhdan and Cutler: "The higher school disappeared no later than the seventh century and was revived no earlier than the eleventh century. The scope of the elementary school dwindles, the book becomes a rarity"[20]. It almost goes without saying that "The whole of [our model city's] life is dominated by religion", as Kazhdan and Cutler stress was the case with middle Byzantine society[21].

Many readers will doubtless have guessed already (or seen in my footnotes) that our model city is Athens in the "Golden Age" of Pericles. Neither of the authorities that I happened to cite, T. B. L.Webster and C. A. Robinson, was particularly interested in minimizing the Athenian

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[14] C. A. Robinson, Jr., *Athens in the Age of Pericles* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1959), p. 92.

[15] Robinson, *Athens,* pp. 94-95.

[16] Kazhdan and Cutler, pp. 463-64.

[17] On Athenian baths, see Webster, *Athenian Culture,* p. 50. On Byzantine baths, see Kazhdan and Cutler, p. 463.

[18] Webster, *Athenian Culture,* pp. 67 and 64.

[19] Webster, *Athenian Culture,* pp. 16-17.

[20] Kazhdan and Cutler, p. 451.

[21] Webster, *Athenian Culture,* p.261; Kazhdan and Cutler, pp. 452-454.

achievement, and certainly never dreamed of denying that Athens was a true city. And, of course, nothing they say about Athens excluded its being the largest, richest, most cultured, and most vital city of Classical Greece. Obviously, eighth-century Constantinople was not just like Periclean Athens. But the points of difference were mostly things like the presence of Christianity and the absence of urban self-government, which were already features of Late Antiquity and did not change in the seventh century. No one has charged that such things kept Byzantine cities from being true cities. Of course, if our criterion for a true city is the presence of a galaxy of geniuses like Aeschylus, Thucydides, and Socrates, we shall find very few cities in all of human history.

How is it, then, that scholars like Kazhdan, Cutler, and Dagron have found the middle Byzantine city to be scarcely worthy of the name? To begin with, their point of comparison has been not the Classical Greek city but the Roman city of Late Antiquity, which was the middle Byzantine city's immediate predecessor. The late Roman city was generally bigger than the Classical Greek city; for those who liked public baths it was much better than its Greek forebear, though for those who liked the theater it was far worse, and little if any better than eighth-century Constantinople. (Contrary to Kazhdan and Cutler's implication, there was some middle Byzantine theater)[22]. Late Roman public buildings were much larger and grander than Classical Greek ones; middle Byzantine public buildings were more on the scale of Classical Greece, whose temples, like middle Byzantine churches, were mostly tiny and at the largest of fairly modest proportions. Classical Greek cities, unlike late Roman ones, were usually unplanned, and so had narrow, irregular streets like most middle Byzantine cities, which had grown up haphazardly after being sacked in the seventh-century invasions. The middle Byzantine city unquestionably looked different from the late Roman city; but it is not at all clear how much practical difference the appearances made in daily life or in anything else. We are left with the important change that the eighth-century Byzantine city was on average less populous than the sixth-century city, probably by more than half[23]. But the middle Byzantine city then grew, and was always on average at least as populous as the Classical

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[22] For references to the theater in the eighth and early ninth centuries, see Theodore of Studius in *Patrologia Graeca* 99, 885C, and the Patriarch Nicephorus in *Patrologia Graeca* 100, 556A-B.

[23] On the size of eighth-century Byzantine cities, see Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 39-41.

Greek city – we should remember that Athens was the very largest of those. This size was quite sufficient to sustain urban life.

There are also major administrative differences between late Roman cities and middle Byzantine cities. Juridically, the late Roman city included a large rural territory, which usually extended right up to the boundaries of neighboring cities. Over this area the city council had immediate jurisdiction, though in practice in Late Antiquity this meant little more than responsibility for making sure that the city and its region paid the quota of taxes assigned by the central Roman government. By the sixth century, most scholars agree, this system had become increasingly impractical, as the city councilors struggled to evade their burdensome duties by every possible means. The system was entirely abandoned during the invasions of the seventh century, so that cities ceased to have fiscal jurisdiction over the villages around them, which assumed responsibility for their own taxes. For most taxpayers the change was probably not very noticeable, and in itself it certainly brought no social revolution. The main group it affected were the members of the city councils, to whom it must have come as a great relief.

But this change seems to have caused conceptual problems for modem scholars. They are used to thinking that virtually every subject of the Later Roman Empire was a citizen of a city. Then, after the seventh century, it becomes obvious that the vast majority of the subjects of the middle Byzantine Empire lived in villages, and were not citizens of any city. It seems that almost overnight the city has practically disappeared. But, as so often happens in comparisons between the early and middle Byzantine periods, different standards are being applied before and after the seventh century. In Pericles' day only about a tenth of the "Athenians" lived within the walls of Athens[24]. In the Later Roman Empire, A. H. M. Jones has written, "The great majority of the cities were ... essentially rural". Jones also called the Later Empire "a country of peasants", since the overwhelming majority, though living in territories legally assigned to cities, resided in the countryside and worked the land[25]. The same was true in the middle Byzantine period, except for the legal adjustment. That adjustment is duly reflected in the language of texts that emanate from the capital and the cities, which are modem scholars'

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[24] Webster, *Athenian Culture,* pp. 40-41. Though the size of the urbanized Piraeus makes the proportion of a tenth somewhat misleading for Athens, the uniquely urbanized character of Athens almost surely makes the proportion an exaggerated one for Classical Greece at large.

[25] A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1964), pp. 714 and 1040-1041.

main sources; but it seems clear that by Late Antiquity most people already identified more with their village than with the city of which it was juridically a part. Even in the earlier Empire, according to Jones, "The peasants had in most regions never learnt to take any interest in the town which governed them ..."[26].

I do not mean to suggest that Roman cities underwent no real change during the seventh century. The great majority were sacked by invaders, then rebuilt on a less grandiose but more defensible scale. In my opinion the degree of shrinkage has been exaggerated by conjectures made from very incomplete archeological evidence and largely irrelevant numismatic evidence – conjectures that have recently been subjected to some telling criticisms[27]. But in any case, by the lowest estimate, there were still a number of cities in the range between 5,000 and 25,000 people. Those who think that a decline to this level brought "the end of Antiquity" need to explain why the period before Alexander the Great, with cities of just this size, deserves to be called part of Antiquity nonetheless.

Though this by no means exhausts the subject of urban civilization, it may be better to turn now to the other main points at issue, most of which are more or less relevant to the question of the city. Kazhdan and Cutler agree with Ostrogorsky that in the seventh century the "ancient" system of large landholders was replaced by a system of small landholders, including some who served as soldiers in the Byzantine army. Kazhdan and Cutler note that most of the large landholders of Late Antiquity had lived in the cities, and conclude that what they call "the 'urban catastrophe' of the seventh century" was primarily responsible for changing the pattern of landholding. They admit, however, that already in the early Byzantine period there was a trend toward smaller landowning[28].

Paul Lemerle, in his recently revised *Agrarian History of Byzantium,* would go farther. He writes of the early Byzantine period:

> ...It is not certain, nor even probable, that in the east, certain areas excepted, the great property had attained the same extent as in the

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[26] A. H. M. Jones, *The Greek City* (Oxford, 1940), p. 303.

[27] For criticisms of conjectures made from the archeological evidence, see Frank Trombley, "The Decline of the Seventh-Century Town", *Byzantine Studies in Honor of Milton V. Anastos,* ed. Speros Vryonis, Jr. (Malibu, 1985), pp. 65-90, especially pp. 75-81. For criticisms of conjectures made from the numismatic evidence, see below, nn. 42 and 43.

[28] Kazhdan and Cutler, p. 441.

> west. Too much stress has been laid on the significance of a few immense estates ..., and it seems to me that in the east the community of free peasants continued to be the basis of rural life[29].

Lemerle then proceeds to the seventh to eighth centuries, for which like most scholars he relies heavily on a single text, the so-called Rural Code. This informal legal handbook was plainly meant for use by villages of independent farmers. On the other hand, as Lemerle insists:

> ...That the Rural Code deals only with the commune of free peasants attests the importance of this latter, perhaps its predominance, but not that it alone exists. The other sources are poor: they suffice nonetheless to establish the existence of the large private property and the large church property[30].

Though Kazhdan and Cutler try to discredit two of these other sources in a footnote, their arguments look suspiciously like special pleading[31]. Carrying revisionism further, Lemerle argues that into the eleventh century free and independent peasants were "still predominant", though by that time somewhat endangered[32].

Lemerle's book is much the finest and most comprehensive survey of Byzantine agrarian history to date, but in the lamentable state of the evidence he himself recognized that his work could not be definitive. Really to settle the question of patterns of land ownership raised by Kazhdan and Cutler would require accurate estimates of the size of landholdings in the early, middle, and late Byzantine periods. These are at present hopelessly beyond our reach, and there is every reason to believe that they will remain so. There can be no serious doubt, however, that in all three periods many smallholders

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[29] Paul Lemerle, *The Agrarian History of Byzantium* (Galway, 1979), p. 15.

[30] Lemerle, *Agrarian History,* p. 52.

[31] Kazhdan and Cutler, p. 447 n. 32. There they term the *Life of Philaretus the Almsgiver* "a hagiographie fairy tale" and dismiss the large landholder Danelis as "a semi-independent ruler." In each case they seem to me to be distracted from sound evidence by irrelevant stylistic conventions in the sources: superficial allusions to the Book of Job in the *Life of Philaretus* and a rhetorical flourish by Constantine Porphyrogenitus meant to emphasize Danelis' wealth. For a defense of the historical accuracy of the *Life of Philaretus,* see Ihor Ševčenko, "Hagiography of the Iconoclast Period", in *Iconoclasm,* ed. Anthony Bryer and Judith Herrin (Birmingham, 1977), pp. 126-129.

[32] Lemerle, *Agrarian History,* p. 187.

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and many great landholders existed. It seems probable that smallholders were a larger percentage in the middle period than in the early and later periods; but it seems scarcely less probable that smallholders predominated in all three periods, except toward the latter part of the third. Furthermore, enemy invasions do not seem particularly likely to have favored smallholding; if anything, they might have led ruined peasants to sell out to buyers with sufficient resources to survive the adverse conditions. In fact, a recent survey has shown that in the middle period large landholders were most common on the borders and on the Anatolian plateau, the regions most affected by the invasions[33]. This is the reverse of what we would expect if invasions broke up large estates. In any case, a revolution in the pattern of landholding is on the present evidence unlikely, and to begin to establish it would require stronger arguments than Kazhdan and Cutler provide.

Before discussing the question of the continuity of Byzantine education and literature through the seventh century, it will be useful to cite a common-sense summary of the cultural situation in the Later Roman Empire, again by A. H. M. Jones:

> There seems to have been a sharp cultural cleavage between the upper classes, who had not only received a literary education in Latin and Greek, but probably spoke one or the other of these languages, and the mass of the people, who were not only illiterate but spoke in a different tongue ... When therefore we speak of the culture of the empire, we must remember that it was the culture of a very small minority[34].

Few, I think, would care to dispute the applicability of this statement to Late Antiquity. After the seventh century the problem of language actually diminished, because Coptic-speaking Egypt and Syriac-speaking Syria were lost and the Greek element was so strong in what remained of the Empire that Greek became the practically universal language. Obviously the great bulk of the population remained illiterate. What is at issue is the fate of the very small cultured minority. Doubtless the crisis that cut urban populations also reduced this elite. But was this enough to break the cultural continuity of Byzantium?

Unquestionably schools became fewer, but since even in Late Antiquity students had almost always studied with one teacher at a time, the

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[33] Michael Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 100-107.

[34] Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 995-996.

average teaching faculty remained the same size. The average level of instruction does seem to have declined a good deal; but, as I have noted earlier, the schools of Periclean Athens were not very advanced, either. No history professor taught Thucydides, and no philosophy professor taught Socrates; but they made shift one way or another. The fact that the Byzantine administrative apparatus survived the seventh century, as Kazhdan and Cutler admit it did, proves that a considerable number of civil servants continued to have a working knowledge of reading, writing, mathematics, and the law[35]. Since much the greatest part of literature from before the seventh century survived into the ninth, the undoubted fact that few books were copied only means that the many old copies sufficed – a sign that the reading public was not growing, but not necessarily that it was contracting very much. The most pertinent argument that Kazhdan and Cutler raise concerns literature. "The end of the seventh and the eighth centuries", they write, "displays impoverished creative activity; until the end of the eighth century even hagiography is quiet, historiography silent[36].

There is certainly something in this, and I have written rather similar things myself – for example, "by the eighth century Greek literature seemed almost to have ended"[37]. Almost, but not quite. A fair amount of theological literature survives from the years between 650 and 800, including the voluminous sermons of Andrew of Crete and Germanus of Constantinople. A quick look through Hans-Georg Beck's manual of Byzantine theological literature turns up about thirty hagiographical texts that can be dated to this time; most are pretty slight productions, but they at least exist[38]. As for historiography, a gap admittedly occurs among preserved texts between the *Paschal Chronicle,* compiled in the 630s, and the chronicles of Nicephorus and Theophanes, compiled about 790 and about 814 respectively. But a glance at the works of Nicephorus and Theophanes will show that their accounts of the years since the early seventh century were not based on mere oral tradition. Each abounds in names and details, and Theophanes' chronicle is divided into elaborately dated annual entries. Theophanes has chronological and historical information for virtually every year, though

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[35] Kazhdan and Cutler, p. 469.

[36] Kazhdan and Cutler, pp. 451-452.

[37] Warren Treadgold, "The Macedonian Renaissance", in *Renaissances before the Renaissance,* ed. Warren Treadgold (Stanford, 1984), p. 77.

[38] See Hans-Georg Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im Byzantinischen Reich* (Munich, 1959), pp. 500-502 (Andrew), 473-475 (Germanus), and 462-467 and 506-508 (hagiography).

sometimes discrepancies between his systems of dating show that he has miscalculated by a year in combining his written sources. For both Theophanes and Nicephorus did have literary sources, including two that can be positively identified and dated to the eighth century[39]. If historiography had truly fallen silent at any point, it would be apparent in Theophanes' work; but there is no gap. What evidently happened is that Theophanes' and Nicephorus' compilations were so convenient that they eclipsed their sources, which were copied too seldom to survive to our day. In general, in estimating supposed lacunae we should reckon that about half of Byzantine literature has been lost, and in some cases more[40].

Nonetheless, since it is reasonable to assume that in periods for which much less literature survives much less literature was written in the first place, the seventh and eighth centuries do seem to have been a time of substantially lowered literary production. The reason that I have emphasized how much was written then rather than how little is to show that enough was written to maintain continuity, if by that we mean an unbroken historical record and literary tradition. Byzantine hagiography and historiography did not die out as Greek drama had during the later Hellenistic period, so that any later examples would have to be considered revivals rather than continuations of a living genre. Certainly on balance Byzantine literature, like Byzantine writers, became less learned and more deeply imbued with Christianity during the seventh century; but the difference was, in my opinion, one of degree rather than of kind, particularly because middlebrow Christian literature had already become common before the seventh century.

Let us now consider the problem of the decline of the monetary economy. According to Kazhdan and Cutler, "The downfall of the polis was connected with a shift toward a barter economy quite noticeable in the seventh to ninth centuries ... The predominance of a barter economy implies the loss of an exact value attributed to goods and services"[41]. This would be an important change in thinking, if it really occurred. Since Kazhdan and Cutler

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[39] The identified sources are Trajan the Patrician and either the so-called Great Chronographer" or (more probably) his own source. See Herbert Hunger, *Die Hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* I (Munich, 1978), pp. 336-339 and 344-347, and Cyril Mango, "The *Breviarium* of the Patriarch Nicephorus", in *Byzantium: Tribute to Andreas N. Stratos,* vol. 2 (Athens, 1986), pp. 539-552.

[40] Such is, at least, the proportion of books described by Photius in the ninth century that is lost today. See Warren Treadgold, *The Nature of the Bibliotheca of Photius* (Washington, 1980), p. 9.

[41] Kazhdan and Cutler, p. 450.

wrote, however, a leading numismatist, Michael Hendy, has published a very long, immensely learned, and in my view utterly convincing study of the Byzantine monetary economy. Hendy presents dozens of complementary arguments to demonstrate that, even in the early period, Byzantium never had "a monetary economy in any modem sense". For Hendy, the Byzantine coinage always played a very limited role, which was determined exclusively by the needs not of the market but of the state. In particular, challenging the main argument that has been invoked by Kazhdan and others, Hendy concludes, "The disappearance of coin from Anatolian archeological sites ... has nothing directly to do with the end of antiquity and the beginning of the Byzantine middle ages ..."[42].

Hendy's argument requires us to turn to the last great dispute among Byzantinists that I have mentioned, that concerning the middle Byzantine system of military land grants. Hendy makes an extremely strong case that the main means by which the Byzantine government distributed coins to the provinces was the payment of the army. In the mid-seventh century, because of the loss of the enormous tax revenues of Syria and Egypt, the government ceased to be able to pay its soldiers at anything resembling the former rate. Instead, the government endowed the soldiers with military lands, from which they were supposed to support and equip themselves. Hendy believes that the military lands came from the imperial estates, which in the early Byzantine period seem to cover something over a tenth of the Empire's land but in the middle Byzantine period are insignificant. (In this, Hendy reached a conclusion that I came to independently at about the same time.) Therefore about 650 military pay in cash was reduced to a token sum, and the amount of coin in the provinces was drastically reduced. This created some problems for taxpayers, though it seems likely that the reduction in military pay also allowed the state to cut taxes. Trade cannot have been much affected, both because there had never been very much trade in the rural subsistence economy and because most of what trade there was had always been conducted by means of barter. Thus the great reduction in coinage in the Byzantine provinces was caused by purely external events (the loss of Egypt and Syria), and its consequences, though perceptible, fell short of being revolutionary[43].

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[42] See Hendy, *Studies,* especially pp. 640-645 (quotations from pp. 643 and 644).

[43] Here I summarize the argument in Hendy, *Studies,* pp. 553-669. For my own conclusions about the military lands, see Warren Treadgold, "The Military

Here I have not been able to deal with all the arguments raised by Kazhdan and Cutler, much less with all the arguments raised by others who have treated the problems related to the continuity of Byzantine civilization. What Kazhdan and Cutler say about the visual arts is largely a needed corrective to the prevailing view that they term "the classicistic approach to Byzantine art", and they admit that given the very partial preservation of the evidence and the persistent problems with dating it their brief account can only be suggestive. Their main point that concerns cultural continuity is one that they also make about everyday life: namely that in the middle Byzantine period the individual and the family were of primary importance, in contrast to the ancient period in which public life was paramount. Despite my use of the quotation about the closed-in and private life of Periclean Athens, I am by no means ready to deny that Byzantine life became more confined and family-oriented from the seventh century onward. Kazhdan's and Cutler's comparison was, after all, not with Classical Greece but with Late Rome, which had larger cities and those celebrated public baths. My difficulty is that like most changes in what we call mentalities this one is extremely difficult to prove, especially with fragmentary evidence that is usually invoked selectively. At all times almost everyone's life has both public and private aspects, both of which are important, and their relative importance varies greatly from person to person. My own guess is that in the seventh century there was some shift of the sort supposed by Kazhdan and Cutler, but that it was of less significance than they attribute to it.

The present pattern of research on Byzantine mentalities, so heavily concentrated on Late Antiquity, seems to me inadequate not only to show what changes took place in the seventh century, but, perhaps paradoxically, even to establish securely what the thought patterns of Late Antiquity were. Take, for example, the centerpiece of late antique *histoire des mentalités,* Peter Brown's thesis about the importance of the holy man. The evidence about holy men increases markedly during the middle Byzantine period, and their importance seems to most observers to have continued unabated, and perhaps to have increased. Brown himself has recognized this in an article in which he argued that the role of the holy man was the key to the Iconoclast controversy of the eighth and ninth centuries. Brown also accepts as a fact "the collapse of the city", and has argued that "Icons suffered, in part, because they were the symbols of a style of political life that was out of date". On the other hand, Brown believes that up to the eighth century "holy man and icon

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Lands and the Imperial Estates in the Middle Byzantine Empire", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983), pp. 619-631.

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had developed concomitantly"[44]. Why then were holy men not out of date, and why were both icons and holy men ultimately victorious in the Iconoclast controversy? Could it be that the relation of the holy man to society has been misinterpreted, or even that the nature of Late Antique society has been misunderstood? In any case, as long as the story of holy men is limited to Late Antiquity, it is interrupted in the middle, and told from only a fraction of the available evidence.

By this time I acknowledge that I am being rather hard on a number of scholars, particularly on Alexander Kazhdan and Anthony Cutler. They are distinguished not only by the high quality of their specialized work but by their unusual willingness to make innovative syntheses. Few, if any, Byzantinists are better than they. But that they are outstanding scholars perhaps underlines the difficulty of overcoming the fragmentation of Byzantine studies, and especially of reconciling disparate conceptions of Byzantium as it was in different periods.

At the root of the problem is probably the admiration that most students of the ancient or medieval world feel for the Classics. To prove that another field is worth studying, they sometimes feel obliged to show either that it bears comparison with Classical Antiquity or that it is in no way comparable, lest it be compared and found hopelessly inferior. Kazhdan and Cutler recognize this problem when they say near the beginning of their article:

> The concept of continuity, inevitably, compels us to weigh medieval Byzantium against the model imitated and gives the impression that there were not two equal societies but a genuine original and a distorted copy. The judgment about quality becomes introduced into our vision of the human past. According to prevailing scholarly opinion, that which is the most classicizing in the Byzantine heritage represents the best quality and is, by extension, the most worthy of study. ...Even if, as we shall try to demonstrate, the "classicist" approach is a historiographic error, it is only human ... The present authors are no less culpable: we have no word to characterize culture after the caesura other than as the antithesis of Continuity[45].

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[44] Brown, "Crisis" (see above, n. 7), pp. 284-296 (quotations from pp. 290, 289, and 296).

[45] Kazhdan and Cutler, p. 436.

This is admittedly refreshing candor. Yet Kazhdan and Cutler seem to have implicitly adopted a position that one might call "neo-classicist". They evidently share with "classicists" the view that the Classical period was a perfect standard of merit, so that anything comparable to it must inevitably be compared to it on Classical terms and no others. They accordingly suppose that Classical times were characterized by thorough urbanization, widespread education, a strong monetary economy, and so on. Then, in order to avoid distorting the Byzantine field by stressing how much Byzantium was like this Classical model – a very desirable aim – they proceed to distort the Byzantine field by stressing how *little* Byzantium was like Classical Antiquity. Thus, in discussing medieval Byzantium, the "classicist" seems to take educated Byzantine urbanites to be typical, and then compares them to educated Greek and Roman urbanites. The "neoclassicist", on the other hand, quite rightly objects that the educated urbanites were not typical of medieval Byzantium, and instead takes illiterate Byzantine peasants as typical; he then compares them to educated Greek and Roman urbanites. But in ancient times too illiterate peasants were typical and educated urbanites atypical. Furthermore, by having a small minority of educated urbanites and a large majority of illiterate peasants Byzantium was not "imitating" Antiquity. It was - for want of a better word - *continuing* Antiquity.

Because many elements did survive from Antiquity into the Byzantine Middle Ages, comparisons between those periods will always be valuable aids to historical understanding. Kazhdan and Cutler are certainly right to make such comparisons; their position is not the "anti-classicist" stance of some medievalists, who seem to think that focusing on Classical elements in the Middle Ages should be avoided, since it automatically implies that the medieval elements were inferior to the Classical ones. But surely this whole discussion would benefit from less ideology of these different kinds. In fact, I think that a dispassionate look will show that even though some significant changes took place in the course of the seventh century, they were not of a sort that Byzantinists need to apologize for.

My working hypothesis would be as follows. By Late Antiquity the Roman Empire had developed an enormous urban, governmental, and military superstructure that it could maintain only with the greatest difficulty. Its cities, administration, and army were magnificent in their way, but maintaining them greatly strained the capacities of the Empire's essentially agricultural and non-monetary economy. When to these pressures were added repeated outside invasions – and recurring outbreaks of plague – the burden became absolutely insupportable. In the West, the Empire simply collapsed, and eventually its urban culture, administration, and army ceased to exist in a

recognizable form. In the East, the Empire was able to continue pretty much as before up to the seventh century, because its richest territories were spared the worst of the invasions. When the seventh-century invasions hit the East, Byzantium only managed to weather the storm by reducing the cost of its cities, government, and army to a level that it could afford.

This reduction was not precisely forced upon the Byzantines. Their rulers could have tried to maintain their cities, bureaucracy, and military payroll at the former size; but if they had done so the Empire would almost certainly have succumbed to internal bankruptcy and foreign conquest, as the Western Empire had done. Instead, by enclosing smaller areas with walls and abandoning some large buildings, they allowed their cities to shrink back to approximately the scale of Classical Greece; they perhaps cut their officials to the numbers of the early Roman Empire; and they arranged for their army to be paid mostly not in money but through land grants, as in Hellenistic Egypt. The end result was a system that could be supported and did survive.

The middle Byzantine Empire was definitely different from the Later Roman Empire, but probably no more different than the later Empire had been from the earlier Empire, the Roman Republic, the Hellenistic monarchies, or the Classical Greek city-states. In the seventh century Byzantium entered a cultural "dark age", but no worse a dark age than Greek culture had already suffered around the first century A.D., or than Latin culture suffered around the third century. By every reasonable measure except an arbitrary chronological cutoff, Byzantium still belonged to the family of "ancient" societies, and continued to do so for centuries. Putting the case in this way does not require the use of any very controversial interpretation of either Byzantium or Antiquity. If the view suggested here seems unfamiliar, the reason probably has more to do with discontinuity in Byzantine studies than with discontinuity in Byzantium itself.

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NUMISMATICS AND THE RIPENING OF BYZANTINE STUDIES

Without serious doubt, Michael Hendy's *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy* is the most important work on Byzantine social and economic history to be published since A. H. M. Jones's *Later Roman Empire* appeared more than twenty years before it[1]. In fact, Hendy shows that a large part of what has been written on the subject during those years has been repeating and reinforcing fundamental mistakes about the Byzantine economy, many of which have attained the status of fashionable orthodoxies. In particular, Hendy explodes the ideas of a disastrous decline in the number of Byzantine cities in the seventh century, a direct connection between scarcity of coinage and urban decline, a late or gradual introduction of the system of military lands, a major economic impact caused by the concessions made to Italian traders under the Comneni, and any really significant role for trade in the Byzantine economy in most periods. Despite his book's title, toward the end of it Hendy states explicitly what he has already made clear, that Byzantium "never did possess ... a monetary economy in any modern sense" (p. 643).

This book ought to bring substantial advances for Byzantine studies, and, especially if its author fulfills his intention to write "one, or perhaps even two, more" studies on the subject (p. 1), a good deal of progress can be expected[2]. But it cannot be entirely taken for granted. Though Hendy's arguments are cogent, they are presented in a book of nearly eight hundred pages, in a style ridden with subordinate clauses, without a formal summary or conclusion, and at an extortionary price. And Hendy has a formidable body of secondary literature against him, written by the majority of Byzantine numismatists and social and economic historians now living. Since his reputation as a numismatist and the sheer quality of his research and analysis

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[1] Michael Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy* (Cambridge, 1985). Cf. A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire: A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1964).

[2] Unfortunately, Hendy never wrote the comprehensive history of the Byzantine economy that he had planned, and, partly as a consequence, his thinking has had less impact on the Byzantine field than it should have had.

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insure that he cannot simply be ignored, he will probably succeed in drastically curtailing restatement of the principal errors that he attacks; but many scholars, especially those who never really read his book, may resist his conclusions as well, claiming that the discipline is not developed enough to support such definite statements about the Byzantine economy, especially quantitative ones. While Hendy is not likely to be right about everything in this book, and I have my own disagreements with him on some points, perhaps his greatest contribution is to demonstrate the possibility of progress in a field where many devote their efforts to arguing that nothing much can be done.

Consequently most of Hendy's introduction is an unusually intelligent polemic against those who admit that work of his sort is desirable but declare that "the Time is not Ripe" (p. 3). In particular he defends the sources, both numismatic and literary, against the view that they are unreliable, inapplicable, insufficiently mulled over, or inadequately edited. He would accept the sources' figures and figures extrapolated from them provided that independent figures or lines of argument lend them support, arguing that "what is important is not the individual figures, but the general pattern" (p. 16). On the other hand, Hendy finds limited value for his work in hagiography and archaeology, which admittedly have had very exaggerated claims made for them in recent years. He is also quite critical of recent attempts to estimate the original size of coin issues on the basis of die duplication, observing that their many assumptions are likely to result in "a severe underestimate", and that even an accurate figure would be useless without knowledge of the size of the Byzantine population (pp. 7-8). Hendy is doubtless right about the estimates of coin issues made so far; yet even a lower limit for the size of an issue has its uses, while the size of the Byzantine population, though not precisely knowable, can certainly be estimated within the sort of range Hendy allows for his estimates of state budgets (cf. pp. 164 and 171).

Then follow eight chapters, grouped into four sections of two chapters each. The first section is "Economy and Society", the first chapter "The Land". This is an effort to explain the Byzantine landscape from the features still surviving in today's Turkey and Balkans, checked by literary and archaeological evidence. The conclusion would be unremarkable if it were not so often ignored by Byzantinists: a sharp contrast between the barren Anatolian and Balkan highlands, which in premodern times were as a rule fit

only for raising livestock, and the more fertile coastal lowlands, where the Byzantines raised their crops. An appendix treats the problem of soil erosion, concluding that its effects were probably noticeable but not catastrophic.

The second chapter, "The Basic Geography of Settlement and Society", endorses Ostrogorsky's argument that conciliar lists give an essentially accurate picture of the places in the Empire that should be termed cities, which are concentrated in the regions where the bulk of the population lived. Not surprisingly, it develops that in Anatolia in all periods cities were very sparse in the highlands and relatively dense in the lowlands, while in the Balkans this pattern held for Late Antiquity but was interrupted when the Byzantines lost control over the highlands and much of the lowlands in the early Middle Ages. (On the Balkan frontier, however, I doubt Hendy's contention that Serdica and Philippopolis were recovered as early as Constantine V's reign and retained after the Bulgar treaty of 816, and in map 19 his indication of the "actual" Balkan frontier as a straight line is a bit disappointing in view of the care he takes in establishing the Anatolian frontiers). In Anatolia, Persian and Arab raiders found the largely empty Anatolian plateau easy to raid but difficult to settle, and only the pastoral Turks succeeded in settling it.

Hendy argues convincingly that the maps of the Empire under the Comneni that we see constantly reproduced err in assigning the Byzantines more than a few isolated strong points on the plateau, and that the battle of Myriocephalum (1176), which he assigns a new location, was an attempt only to consolidate control over what the Byzantines already held rather than to clear the plateau of Turks. It follows that less was lost after the Comneni than is usually believed, since the Nicene, Trapezuntine, and Cilician Armenian successor states continued to hold nearly all of the lowlands even after 1204. The implications for the decline of Hellenism in Anatolia, on which Hendy does not dwell, are clear: few Greeks had ever lived in the eastern and central plateau, most of those in the western plateau were evacuated by the Comneni, and the main Greek population centers in the lowlands contained many Greeks right up to the population exchanges of 1923.

Hendy makes another demonstration of great interest: though in the Balkans, as one might expect, the large landholders were concentrated in the lowlands where most of the people were, in Anatolia throughout the middle Byzantine period the large landholders were concentrated on the lightly populated plateau to the exclusion of the lowlands. Hendy sees in this "a

previously unsuspected, but consciously and consistently pursued, determination on the part of the imperial government to preserve its fiscal position ... in the theme of Thrakesion in particular and possibly in western Anatolia in general" (p. 135). If this is so, and it seems the only plausible explanation, the depredations of the "powerful" in the tenth century would have had little fiscal impact—though they would still have undermined the army, which was largely settled on the plateau on lands that the magnates were taking away from the soldiers. In fact, though the thematic army had disappeared by the Comnenian period, the imperial treasury was far from poor after western Anatolia was recovered. Hendy does not explain why the Anatolian military aristocracy represented by the Comneni should finally have succeeded in seizing power just when its territorial base was lost for good, but then no other Byzantinist has explained this satisfactorily either.

The second section, "Finance", begins with the third chapter, "The Budget". Hendy tries to estimate the size and apportionment of the state budget in two widely separated reigns, those of Andronicus II (1282-1328) and Justinian I (527-65). For Andronicus the size of the budget is recorded by a reliable source as one million hyperpyra (in gold value about 500,000 old nomismata). For Justinian Hendy calculates the budget at between five and six million nomismata. Hendy notes (pp. 172-3) my recent estimates of the budget at about 1.8 million nomismata in 780-802 and about 3.3 million in 842-56, observing that all these estimates are compatible and tend to support each other. Naturally, however, they remain subject to further correction and refinement. In reading Hendy's book, for example, I discovered that I had miscopied a figure which when corrected lowers my estimate for 842-56 to about 2.9 million nomismata[3].

Similarly, two considerations would suggest raising Hendy's estimate for Justinian's reign to the about seven million nomismata calculated earlier by Ernst Stein[4]. First, Hendy interprets a passage in Procopius to mean that in 518-27 Justinian collected total revenues of some 3.2 million nomismata a year (pp. 170-1); but Procopius actually describes this as only

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[3] For an explanation of this error, see Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival, 780-842,* (Stanford, 1988), p. 453 n. 460.

[4] Ernst Stein, *Studien zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Reiches* (Stuttgart, 1919), p. 155.

the illegal revenue, which he has said Justinian raised by confiscation[5]. Whether or not Procopius exaggerated that illegal revenue, the total revenue was surely higher. Second, Hendy estimates the annual pay of a cavalryman under Justinian at about nine nomismata, and that of an infantryman at about five (p. 166); but this represents rations alone, and Stein estimated the full pay at about thirty nomismata, which was the amount of the *auram tironicum* that the state would accept instead of a soldier.[6] The higher figure gains support from the fact that under Diocletian soldiers' pay equivalent to at least 12 nomismata proved inadequate without artificially lowered prices (p. 177; cf. p. 458). It in turn supports the estimate of Laiou-Thomadakis that under Andronicus II soldiers were paid 70 to 80 hyperpyra (35 to 40 old nomismata), rather than the about 30 hyperpyra (15 old nomismata) preferred by Hendy (pp. 162-3). These adjustments would make military pay some 65% of Justinian's budget and 80% of Andronicus's, confirming Hendy's very just observation that in ancient and medieval states the army was the largest item of expenditure (p. 157).

As for revenue, Hendy repeatedly demonstrates that "revenues derived from essentially urban contexts, and therefore particularly from trade, are relatively insignificant when compared with those derived from land" (p. 175). He broadly endorses Jones's estimate that in the fifth and sixth centuries the revenue from land was 95% of the whole, that from trade 5% (p. 157). Hendy is unquestionably right to reject the text of Benjamin of Tudela that puts the trade duties of Constantinople in the mid-twelfth century at the equivalent of 15,000 old nomismata a day, but in view of the small size of trade and the exemption of Italians from duties by that time he may not be right to reject the reading that makes this the trade duties for a year (pp. 173-4). In the course of his discussion of the budget, Hendy makes perceptive remarks on a variety of subjects; for example, he dismisses as absurd the usual assumption that the middle Byzantine army was all or mostly cavalry (p. 182 and n. 144) and conjectures that the immense wealth of the widow Danelis of Patras derived from "some kind of weaving establishment" (pp. 206-7). Of

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[5] Procopius, *Secret History* 19.8.

[6] I have since recalculated pay under Justinian at 20 nomismata for an infantryman and 24 nomismata for a cavalryman; see Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army, 284-1081* (Stanford, 1995), pp. 149-57.

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Byzantine magnates, Hendy concludes that they were often very wealthy but made little use of coin, which was primarily used in government transactions.

The fourth chapter, still in the section on "Finance", is entitled "The Limiting Factors", and discusses the financial problems that the Byzantine government faced. To begin with, Hendy observes that the cost of large military expeditions could exceed a year's revenue, so that the failed campaigns against the Vandals in 468, the Sicilian Normans in 1155-6, and the Ottomans in 1303-4 exhausted the Empire for a generation or more. In anticipation of such enormous expenditures, some emperors accumulated great reserves, of which the largest, that of Anastasius I (491-518), exceeded three years' revenue. If, however, the reserve was exhausted, the government soon had to resort to cutting salaries, melting down objects of precious metal, appealing for donations, making confiscations, or debasing the coinage. Hendy emphasizes that the last was the result entirely of fiscal pressure, and need have nothing to do with a general economic decline. Since by the middle Byzantine period the tax rates had become inelastic and Byzantine bankers were far too poor to make loans on a scale helpful to the state, the emperors found tapping private wealth extremely difficult. All this is well taken. I question only Hendy's interpretation of the large revenues from "the treasures under the earth" that according to a chronicler came to light and helped balance the budget under Basil I (867-86). Though Hendy seems to think these were pots of gold (p. 228), in view of their high value they were more probably mineral strikes. In fact, Hendy almost totally ignores the problem of mining throughout his book, but the applicable evidence is so exiguous that one can scarcely blame him.

The third section, "Coinage (Circulation)", including chapters on "Supply" and "Supervision", is more technical, and most of it is chiefly of interest to numismatists. The points of more general interest are the insignificance of the fiscal impact of paying subsidies to the barbarians (pp. 263-4), the crucial importance of Constantine's confiscation of the treasuries of his defeated rivals and of the pagan temples for his establishment of an abundant gold coinage (pp. 284-5), the fundamental role of military salaries (and secondarily of the public postal service) in distributing coins to the public, and the great value of the imperial baggage train (though it seems to have consisted mostly of items that were requisitioned rather than purchased). The admirable treatment of the measures taken to prevent counterfeiting (which seems to have been relatively rare) and to make up for losses in coins'

weight because of wear (which was a pervasive problem) makes a considerable contribution to the history of late Roman law.

The fourth section, "Coinage (Production)", contains chapters entitled "Administrative Basis" and "History". These, rather less technical than the two before them, should be useful for economic and institutional historians as well as numismatists. Hendy establishes that normally each of the Late Roman dioceses had its own mint up to about 630, when the Eastern regional mints were centralized in a single mint at Constantinople. He would connect the centralization with the breaking up of the Prefecture of the East into the different administrative departments characteristic of the middle Byzantine period. This administrative system continued until Alexius I (1081-1118), who combined many provinces and departments and opened several regional mints. After 1204, Hendy notes that the central mint continued operating virtually continuously, first at Nicaea and then at Constantinople, until 1453.

Under "History", Hendy carefully reconstructs the monetary system of Diocletian, showing that its gold and silver coins actually proved quite stable, despite the inflation of the billon and copper. The main change made by Constantine was to lower the weight of the gold coinage under financial pressure; this weight persisted because it was a more convenient fraction of a pound and because Constantine struck many more coins. Then silver coins mostly went out of use and the base metal coins fluctuated wildly in value until Anastasius I, who created the reasonably stable copper follis on the model of barbarian coinages, and Leo III (717-41), who created the quite stable silver miliaresion. Both follis and miliaresion seem to have retained the same relation to the gold nomisma because they were essentially fiduciary coins whose value did not depend on fluctuations in the prices of silver and copper. Hendy's explanation of the stabilization of the coinage by Alexius I after its debasement is summarized from his earlier book on the subject[7]. He then describes the increasing debasement and confusion of the coinage after 1204, until John V (1354-91) introduced a new system based on a pure silver coin that conforms to the general pattern in the Eastern Mediterranean in this period.

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[7] Hendy, *Coinage and Money in the Byzantine Empire, 1081-1261* (Washington, 1969).

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In place of a conclusion, the book ends with a long section, "Preliminary Observations, Future Directions", which covers several interrelated topics. Hendy begins by stressing that the enormous expense of transport in Byzantine times made most long-distance trade uneconomic. The only significant exception was the trade that supplied Constantinople, which occupied a group of tradesmen and merchants organized into strictly regulated guilds. Though usually they enjoyed little prestige or influence, the guildsmen gained a share of political power after 1028, when they formed an alliance with the emperors of the time and the civil bureaucracy. In return for supporting the regime against the military commanders, the guildsmen received honorary state offices and large cash payments, which were financed by debasement of the coinage and neglect of the army. Hendy sees this alliance as the result of growth in the economic power of the guildsmen, and notes that after an interruption from 1081 under the early Comneni the alliance regained power between 1182 and 1204. Although Hendy acknowledges that in this case traders may have caused a major drain on state revenue, he decisively demonstrates that no such drain resulted from the exemptions from trade duties allowed to Italians, which at the maximum amounted to about 2.5% of the cost of Manuel I's Italian campaign of 1158, or a third of what that emperor spent on the wedding of his favorite niece (p. 598). Hendy concludes that "trade was not the basic dynamic behind the production of coinage in the late Roman and Byzantine empire" (p. 600).

That basic dynamic was, of course, the intervention of the state, which distributed coin through salaries and other payments and recycled it through taxation. Among the main state payments Hendy counts those made for the stations and personnel of the public post, which as he shows continued through the middle Byzantine period. However, a passage that he quotes from Michael Psellus (p. 612) also shows that the post depended mostly upon requisitions in kind for which no money was paid, and in any case the post cannot have been an item of more than minor and local importance in comparison with military pay. Next Hendy includes a brief discussion of the Ottoman budget, which displayed the same preponderance of revenue from land rather than trade, and of expenditure on military pay above all other items, already established for Byzantium. Another fact stands out from the Ottoman figures: the enormous portion of the land tax that was raised from Egypt and Syria, which amounted to nearly twice that from Anatolia and the Balkans combined.

Hendy now formulates a fundamental problem that has been almost entirely overlooked by Byzantine social and economic historians. He estimates that in the seventh century, with the loss of Egypt, Syria, and most of the Balkans, the Empire would have lost as much as 75% of its revenue (p. 620). (The drop between Stein's estimate for the sixth century and mine for the eighth is 76%.) Yet most units of the army retreated into Anatolia with their divisional identities and probably the majority of their soldiers intact (pp. 621-3). (The army numbered 150,000 in the sixth century and probably 80,000 in the eighth century.)[8] "In an ancient or medieval context, and with the inevitable implication of an inelasticity of revenue, the financial strains involved must have been simply horrendous, and the question therefore ineluctably arises as to how the state continued to finance the army" (p. 625).

Leaving this question aside for the moment, Hendy introduces a new piece of evidence for the supply of the army in the seventh century, the seals of managers of state warehouses that increase enormously in number beginning with the years 654-59. Hendy is able to connect one group of such seals, referring to Slavic prisoners of war in Anatolia and dated to 694/5, with the Slavs captured in 688/9 whom Justinian II settled in Anatolia for future use as soldiers. Hendy argues persuasively that these state warehouses were set up to sell the Slavs military equipment after they had had five years to establish themselves on their new lands. If selling arms was by then the major function of state warehouses, it seems to follow that even by 654 Byzantine soldiers were responsible for their own equipment, as they surely were by the eighth century. If the state expected its soldiers to equip themselves, it must have given them some means of supporting this new and heavy burden. Since Hendy has already shown that the state lacked money, the only possible compensation would have been land—in other words, the soldiers' land grants that are first mentioned in the legislation of the tenth century.

A large and repetitious secondary literature which has been accumulating over almost thirty years has tried to explain the absence of early attestation of the military lands by supposing that they did not exist until soon before they are attested. The sources' silence really needs no explanation, because the military lands are mentioned only in imperial novels, and virtually no novels survive for the seventh through ninth centuries; if other texts' silence about military lands proved that they did not exist, they could

[8] See now Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, pp. 59-75.

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not have existed in the tenth century, either. In an effort to solve this illusory problem, many have abandoned the old theory of Ostrogorsky that the military lands were created under Heraclius. Hendy shows that Ostrogorsky's original date for the creation of the military lands of about 620 is probably some thirty years too early, because by forced loans and confiscations Heraclius managed to pay his troops at a barely adequate rate until he recovered Egypt and Syria from the Persians. Only towards the beginning of the reign of Constans II (641-68), soon after Egypt and Syria had been lost permanently to the Arabs, was the government compelled to cut military pay to a token sum and to compensate the soldiers with land grants. Hendy suggests that the grants were taken from the imperial estates (pp. 637-38), independently reaching a conclusion that I reached myself at nearly the same time[9]. The coincidence is only superficially remarkable, because anyone who considers the fiscal realities of the situation will be led to a similar solution.

Now Hendy turns to the numismatic evidence, observing that modern finds of coins lessen for Heraclius' reign and recover a bit for the first part of Constans' reign, after which come "almost two centuries in which virtually no coins at all occur on Anatolian sites" (p. 640). Since military pay was the main means of distribution for coins in the provinces, when Heraclius cut it in half coins became scarcer, and when it was cut to an even smaller fraction coins became very scarce indeed. (My own guess is that the usual pay of a soldier was 20 nomismata until Heraclius, who cut it to ten, after which it was cut to five nomismata under Constans II.) Hendy concludes, disagreeing with Clive Foss and others, "The disappearance of coin from Anatolian archaeological sites therefore has nothing directly to do with the end of antiquity and the beginning of the Byzantine middle ages", though he admits that the economic state of Anatolia in the mid-seventh century was probably not very favorable (p. 644).

All this is most persuasive, but Hendy is less convincing when he comes to explain the reappearance of coin finds in the mid-ninth century, since his suggestion that it resulted from the tax reforms of Nicephorus I (802-11) provides for no new means of distributing the coins. My own recent theory that the soldiers' pay was approximately doubled in 840 would provide

[9] See Treadgold, "The Military Lands and the Imperial Estates in the Middle Byzantine Empire", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (*Okeanos: Essays Presented to Ihor Ševčenko*, 1983), pp. 619-31.

the mechanism that Hendy leads one to expect at the time when he would lead one to expect it, but depends on evidence from an Arab source that cannot be squared with Hendy's theory of the survival of military payment[10]. Hendy conjectures that in the mid-seventh century the government discontinued all regular pay but continued the quinquennial donative; this was paid to different themes in different years according to a four-year cycle that in a modified form appears in Constantine Porphyrogenitus' *De Caeremoniis* (pp. 645-51).

There are several problems with this. First, the donative is reported to have been quinquennial, not quadrennial, and Hendy's argument that it was quadrennial in practice forces him to assume that it was frequently late. Worse still, Procopius says that Justinian allowed the quinquennial donative to lapse, and though Hendy considers this unlikely he can provide no examples of quinquennial donatives after Justinian. Further, Hendy's reconstruction of the "primitive" and "intermediate" cycles of payment forces him to make exceptions for five of eight themes, which appear in Constantine's list in the wrong places for his theory. Then Hendy's schedule fails the one historical test to which it can be put, since the theme of Macedonia is known to have been due for payment in 809 and the Armeniac theme in 811, though according to Hendy's list the two themes should have been paid three years apart[11]. Under the circumstances Hendy's schedule can hardly be preferred to the Arabic evidence, which says that the troops were paid at intervals ranging from one to six years, gives a great deal of other plausible and verifiable information, and in fact seems to depend on a Byzantine government manual[12].

After discussing cases in which coin finds and seals of managers of warehouses correspond to known military expeditions and therefore confirm the military functions of the warehouses and coinage, Hendy adds some brief guidelines for future research. He stresses again the overwhelming role of the state and the minimal role of trade in the Byzantine monetary economy, urges comparative study of states whose economies are better known, especially

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[10] For my views on military pay, now see Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, pp. 118-49.

[11] Cf. Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6301 (808/9), pp. 484-85 de Boor and A.M. 6303 (810/11), p. 489 de Boor.

[12] Treadgold, "Remarks on the Work of Al-Jarmī on Byzantium", *Byzantinoslavica* 44 (1983), pp. 205-12; cf. Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, pp. 137-38.

England, and warns numismatists not to ignore history and historians not to ignore numismatics.

Hendy's book is easy to criticize and difficult to praise enough. Despite its excellent indices (and fine maps), most readers will find it rather inconvenient to use, especially because of its somewhat awkward organization, and some will quite unreasonably blame it for not being the much-needed general history of the Byzantine coinage, economy, and administration for which it has done a great deal to prepare. But in substance, if not in organization, it is an example of the best that history today can do. Combining a traditional interest in solving large problems with a modern awareness of those problems' complexity, retaining both a specialist's care in analysis and a generalist's readiness to use every applicable approach, and refusing to interpret Byzantium either in narrowly Byzantine terms or in terms of anachronistic modern ideologies, Hendy has begun to redirect a scholarly discussion that had lost its way.

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IMAGINARY EARLY CHRISTIANITY

AVERIL CAMERON. *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. Pp. xv, 260;

PETER BROWN. *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992. Pp. x, 182.

Though the manager of my local bookstore tells me that Michel Foucault has ceased to sell since the appearance of his new biography[1], he continues to shape the study of Late Antiquity, including two recent books on Christianity and rhetoric by Averil Cameron and Peter Brown. Cameron had already published a review article, "Redrawing the Map: Early Christian Territory after Foucault", that applauds the insights into the subject in Foucault's *Histoire de la sexualité* and his influence on Peter Brown in particular[2]. Of course, nothing in the new biography of Foucault refutes or was meant to refute what he thought about Late Antiquity. Likewise, current scholarly fashion need have nothing to do with whether these two books provide illuminating interpretations of Christian rhetoric.

With almost simultaneous publication dates, the books are based on sets of lectures given by Cameron at the University of California at Berkeley in 1986 and by Brown at the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1988. Not only the poststructuralism but the theses of the two books are in their essentials the same: that the use of rhetoric made a major contribution to the spread of Christianity between about 300 and about 450 AD. They are not entirely independent of each other: Cameron thanks Brown for allowing her to see his work before its publication (pp. xiii-xiv), while Brown cites Cameron's book twice (pp. 40, 74) and contributed an encomium to its dust-jacket. Yet the books appear to have been conceived independently, and are by no means variations on the same book.

Perhaps the most notable difference is that Cameron seems more sympathetic to Christianity than Brown does. Her disapproval of previous approaches is plain: "Whether viewed from the rationalist or the overtly Marxist perspective, the advance of Christianity is seen as bad in itself, and

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[1] James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (New York, 1993).

[2] *Journal of Roman Studies*, lxxvi (1986), 266-71.

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Christian rhetoric as a patent justification of that advance" (p. 25). She is equally critical of the apologetic stance of most New Testament scholars, and concludes: "Perhaps now, when one effect of the present awareness of the importance of texts is to break down the barriers between different kinds of academic writing, we have more chance than previously to avoid either extreme" (pp. 28-9).

Hostility to Christianity has not been typical of Brown's earlier work, and he does not express it overtly here. None of his characterizations of individual Christians and their actions, some of which were denounced at the time by other Christians, necessarily implies a negative view of Christianity as such. Yet that is the cumulative impression left on the reader. The blurb, even if not composed by Brown, accurately conveys his overall tone: "Brown points out ... how churchmen expressed their new local power through violence against rivals: Jewish synagogues and Roman temples were destroyed, and Hypatia, one of the few women with a public role as a philosopher, was lynched in Alexandria. Brown demonstrates how Christian teaching provided a model for a more autocratic, hierarchical empire: the ancient ideals of democracy and citizenship gave way to the image of a glorious ruler showing mercy to his lowly and grateful subjects". These are just the sorts of things that lead some scholars to consider Christianity "bad in itself".

Among other differences, Brown makes rather more use of ancient sources, particularly pagan ones like Libanius and Eunapius. Cameron makes more use of the New Testament and quotations from such writers as Anthony Burgess (p. 24), Milan Kundera (p. 88), Stevie Smith (p. 155), and Emily Dickinson (p. 189), which are sometimes used to demonstrate points to which they seem of dubious relevance. Of Cameron's seventeen illustrations, twelve are at least five centuries later than the period she is discussing; her reasons for including them are never made clear. The poststructuralism is a little more obtrusive in Cameron's writing, as when she praises Foucault on page 2 and refers to the life of Jesus as "the text of the life of Jesus" (pp. 31-2).

While Cameron uses some modern jargon, Brown makes a jargon of his own of Greek or Latin terms that could easily be rendered in English in most places. Brown's formerly Rococo style can become overly informal here, as when he defines *karteria* (endurance) as "the ability to tough it out in confrontations with the powerful" (p. 64). Metaphors are mixed: *paideia* (the traditional school curriculum) "was a moral and intellectual boot camp in which the flighty young sharpened their minds and toughened their moral fiber" (p. 123). Sometimes the point is obscure; when Brown writes, "accident and the tenacious bonds of family tradition and regional loyalty ensured that

Themistius happened to be a philosopher at Constantinople" (p. 68), was this coincidental or inevitable?

Neither author claims to be presenting a rigorously reasoned case. Cameron admits that "my aim has been less to present a detailed justification of any one part of the argument than to make a series of suggestions" (p. 6). Brown writes: "Readers must know the tentativeness of some of the connections that are advanced in this book between various cultural, religious, and social phenomena". But then, noting that much current scholarship agrees with him, he concludes: "It is profoundly reassuring to work in a field among scholars who have questioned and replaced so many standard generalizations and familiar narratives in recent years" (p. viii). Given the strong tendency for scholars to repeat the latest revisionism, such self-reinforcement may not be an adequate substitute for arguments and evidence.

Both Cameron and Brown begin by maintaining that rhetoric in the earlier Roman Empire should be taken more seriously than it usually has been. Cameron says of the rhetorical forms of the time: "to us they may seem hackneyed, but to a contemporary they would probably seem reassuring and impressive" (p. 82). But she has just referred to "the lament for the decline of oratory that appears at the end of the first century not only in Tacitus' *Dialogues* but also in a whole range of contemporary Latin writers" (p. 81), which seems to indicate that many contemporaries found such rhetoric neither reassuring nor impressive. Similarly, Brown writes: "The very standardization of this rhetoric, which is so tedious to a modern reader, explains its attraction in the first and second centuries A.D. Formalized, elevated, reassuringly predictable, and invariably fulsome, rhetoric provided a permanent background music to the consensus in favor of Roman rule skillfully fostered among the civil notables of the Greek world" (pp. 39-40). The footnote to this sentence cites no ancient source but two modern studies, one of which is Cameron's book.

Then the discussions of the development of Christian rhetoric diverge. Cameron's "series of suggestions" is arranged in six chapters which, because of their tentativeness, are somewhat difficult to summarize. In the first, "How Many Rhetorics? The Legacy of Separation", she maintains that early Christians too took rhetoric seriously, though their rhetoric differed from pagans' in putting greater stress on content. The second chapter, "Showing and Telling: The Power of Signs", describes the "figural" features of Christian rhetoric, particularly imagery of the body, while the third chapter, "Stories People Want", emphasizes narrative features, particularly in hagiography.

The fourth chapter, "The Power over the Past: Accommodation and Appropriation", suggests that in the fourth century these features helped Christianity replace paganism as the empire's official religion. The fifth chapter, "The Rhetoric of Paradox: The Other Side of Christian Discourse", suggests that, by emphasizing rhetorical paradoxes, Christianity managed to keep room for a private element while entering public life. The sixth chapter, "Toward a New Representation: The Implications of Christianization", and an "Envoi" which takes the place of a conclusion, find it paradoxical that, by the sixth century, Christianity came to exclude other ways of looking at the world, but implies that the elements described earlier were crucial to its success in doing so.

In this discussion, tentative though it often is, Cameron insists on several specific points that the evidence she cites either fails to support or actually contradicts. One is her starting-point: "Even when Christian writers and preachers questioned the very possibility of expressing their faith in words ... they were doing so in a context in which the language of Christian faith was seen as being of paramount importance" (p. 15). Though certainly Christians thought it important to preach, and to avoid language that was heretical, Cameron can cite no Christian author who asserts the primary importance of language, and she cites several who flatly deny it. On page 48 she notes: "Paul lays enormous emphasis on the mystery of Christian truth and the inability of words to express it: 'The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power'". On page 177: "Like Jerome, Gregory of Nyssa plays on the contrast between treatises on virginity and the real thing, between text and reality: 'Persons who compose long and detailed panegyrics and think that thus they add something to the wonder of virginity deceive themselves'". But Cameron refuses to take such statements at face value, no doubt realizing that doing so would greatly diminish the importance of her subject.

Her insistence that Christian rhetoric was highly "figural" is hard to defend, except in the most restricted sense. When she states that Eusebius' Life of Constantine "is figural to a high degree", her main evidence is that Eusebius compares Constantine to Moses–not of course in his appearance, but in his rescuing his people from persecution (pp. 53-5). This is metaphorical, but not visual. Yet Cameron goes on to say that, beginning with Eusebius, "appeals to visual evidence and discussion of visual art become extremely prominent in Christian writing, and they usually focus on its meaning—that is, on the relation between the sign and the signified" (p. 64). For this she gives a single reference, to the excerpts in Cyril Mango's sourcebook of Byzantine art. In fact, scarcely any of Mango's short collection refers to Christian figural art of this period, of which Mango remarks: "In the

realm of the figurative arts our documentation is decidedly meager ... [A] specifically Christian pictorial art was as yet in its infancy"[3]. Elsewhere, Mango rightly observes that "the Fathers of the Church have, by and large, very little to say on the subject of images", so little as to cause difficulties for later opponents of Iconoclasm[4].

The evidence for Cameron's statement that from the fourth century "the visual presentation of Christian themes was to become a very important instrument in their diffusion" is a passage in which Nilus of Ancyra advocates decorating churches with biblical scenes for the benefit of "the illiterate, who are unable to read the Holy Scriptures" (pp. 150-1). She ignores Nilus' implication that pictures are simply an inferior substitute for reading, indicating that not even Christian art gave much value to pictorial qualities. On page 226, Cameron comes to her dubious conclusion: "The issue of representation was central: if Christianity could not be adequately expressed by logical means, resort must be had to image, and where words failed, to the visual image". Yet the sort of thing that words could not express was the Trinity, the Resurrection, or the Virgin Birth, none of which is ever depicted in this period as such, probably out of reasonable fear that such pictures would lead to confusion and heresy.

Cameron's primary interest is naturally in rhetorical images, and here, too, her conclusions sit badly with the sources, though a good deal better with poststructuralist secondary literature, particularly Peter Brown's *The Body and Society*[5]. Thus she says in her penultimate paragraph: "The sign system of early Christianity ... encouraged by the need to explain the union of bodily flesh and divinity in the Incarnation, [formed] around the body itself, and especially the mechanics and avoidance of carnal knowledge and procreation. Paradoxically, in the context of the discourse of abstinence, the true knowledge at which the signs pointed was defined in terms of desire ... Now *eros*, desire, also occupies the center of poststructuralist poetics and is often seen as a key to theories of the subject" (p. 228). Her undemonstrated implication is that early Christianity, which advocated abstinence, was obsessed with sexuality.

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[3] Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453* (Englewood Cliffs, 1972), p. 4.

[4] Cyril Mango, "The Availability of Books in the Byzantine Empire, A.D. 750-850", in *Byzantine Books and Bookmen* (Washington, 1975), p. 30.

[5] Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988).

She formulates a similar paradox when she observes that the Church Fathers' "praise of the unwashed and uncultured over and against the social advantages of civilization and learning, which they did not hesitate to display themselves in their own writing, is indicative of an area of deep ambiguity and uncertainty in contemporary Christian culture" (p. 179). Yet, from the early Christians' professed viewpoint, there was no contradiction in either case. To judge from their own statements, even those quoted by Cameron, the Church Fathers considered learning and sexuality neutral in themselves—good when they focused attention on God, bad when they became a distraction from him. Cameron sees a contradiction only because she assumes, without demonstration, that her sources did not mean what they said.

Cameron acknowledges that "God was not dead in the Roman Empire" (p. 44). But she still maintains "it was not an intrinsically more religious or more spiritual mentality that enabled Christianity to prevail in the medieval culture of Byzantium and the West, so much as the fact that the Christian church and Christian discourse had achieved the position of chief carriers and arbiters of culture" (p. 222). This conclusion, so satisfying for a cultural historian, is obviously important if it is true: whether or not Christians cared much about culture in itself, they might have used it successfully to spread their religion. Both Cameron and Brown think they did. But this question raises wider questions about Roman society and culture that Cameron's book never really considers.

Brown's book does. He states clearly, and doubtless correctly, at the outset: "Power, not persuasion, remains the most striking characteristic of the later Roman Empire in all its regions" (p. 7). His four chapters reflect this view, and as they present a formal argument, are easier to summarize. In the first, "*Devotio*: Autocracy and Elites", he argues that, up to the fourth century, the local elites represented by the empire's city councils used oratory to temper and restrain the central government's power. In the second, "*Paideia* and Power", he suggests that this worked because councilors and emperors shared a sense of proper deportment, inculcated by a rhetorical education, which could be invoked by orators and especially by pagan philosophers.

In his third chapter, "Poverty and Power", Brown describes a process in the late fourth and early fifth centuries by which Christian bishops and monks presented themselves through rhetoric as advocates of the urban poor, whom they organized, sometimes as mobs, to seize local power from the city councils. The final chapter, "Towards a Christian Empire", shows bishops using rhetoric and acting as the empire's new local leaders, but with a difference: now Christian emperors, unrestrained by effective elites and legitimized by divine authority, enjoyed virtually absolute power.

Most parts of Brown's discussion look persuasive. Unlike Cameron, he only occasionally quotes sources that contradict him. He creates no unnecessary paradoxes by overstating both sides. His language is generally moderate; I have already noted that he never states his implied opinion that Christianity changed the empire for the worse as plainly as his blurb does. Those without professional knowledge of the subject will probably accept nearly everything Brown says. Many specialists will realize only after some reflection, if at all, that he has ignored several well-established facts about the empire without arguing against them.

For example, he argues as if nearly everyone in the empire lived in cities: "The eastern empire remained an urban civilization" (p. 21). But every Roman social or economic historian knows that the empire's urban population had never been more than a small fraction of the total. Once, quoting A. H. M. Jones's estimate that the cities contributed only about one-twentieth of the empire's taxes, Brown adds the aside: "From the fiscal point of view, the later empire was an agrarian society" (p. 78), without noting the obvious corollary, that the money came from the countryside roughly in proportion to its population. Brown quickly returns to "the major [urban] centers of the eastern Mediterranean, whose populations ran to hundreds of thousands" (p. 79). But Libanius puts the population of Antioch at just 150,000 in the later fourth century[6]. Constantinople and Alexandria seem to have been little if at all larger at the time, and no other eastern city was anywhere near as big. Jones called the empire "a country of peasants"[7]. This fact considerably undermines Brown's insistence on the benefits provided to everyone by the old city councils.

Brown quotes and interprets Libanius with approval: "Lavish spending was supposed to be a family tradition: notables 'had their forebears as teachers of good-will towards the city ... For these men inherited their ancestral property by good fortune, and spend it freely by their generosity'. Their wealth, then, was not a matter of good luck; still less could it be said to rest on exploitation. It was wealth held 'for the common benefit'" (p. 83). But later Brown admits: "Never, perhaps, as wholehearted as they claimed to be, acts of *euergesia* [munificence] were now extorted from the wealthy like any other tax—and were as frequently evaded" (p. 86).

This points to what virtually all ancient sources and modern authors, except Brown, consider the real reason for the decline of the city councils,

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[6] Libanius, *Epistulae*, no. 1,137: Wolf = no. 1,119 Förster.

[7] A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey* (Oxford, 1964), ii. 1,041.

which had nothing to do with Christians: it was the increased taxation of the time, going back to the very pagan emperor Diocletian. The city councilors, or decurions, were responsible for collecting the taxes, and had to make up any shortfall from their own fortunes. They consequently made every effort to escape their status, by gaining senatorial rank, by joining the army, or even by becoming Christian priests or monks. As Jones says, "we never hear of a contented decurion"[8]. Such was the elite whose place Brown depicts bishops as usurping.

As for what the blurb celebrates as "the ancient ideals of democracy and citizenship", Brown's references to those are mostly oblique. By the late fourth century, he says, "the brittle privileges and self-respect once associated with the notions of citizenship had slipped away. Townsmen and peasants alike learned to approach the great on bended knee" (p. 154). But elections of officials by Roman citizens had lapsed before Christ began his ministry and, by the fourth century, any idea of democracy had long been suppressed by pagan emperors, not by Christians. The idea that ordinary people should have a vote in politics would have seemed absurd to the city councilors of the third and fourth centuries, whose status was self-perpetuating. Once in passing, Brown mentions the only powerful figures of the time whom common people did have some voice in electing: "It was the lower classes of Mauretanian Caesarea as a whole ... who supported the election as bishop of a man known to be effective in dealing with the authorities" (p. 101).

Yet in Brown's book, bishops appear in a consistently unfavourable light, especially when they defend the lower classes. Cyril of Alexandria admittedly had much to answer for, though his responsibility for the lynching of Hypatia is questionable and Brown stops just short of asserting it (p. 116). But his treatment of Basil of Caesarea borders on innuendo. As Brown notes, Basil organized famine relief and built a hospital for lepers; "his friend Gregory Nazianzen was careful to point out" that "this activity was directed to the care of persons who counted for nothing in the political life of Caesarea". But Brown sees through him: "In fact, we know from his correspondence that Basil sought to extend his influence throughout the governing classes as far afield as Constantinople ... Basil exploited to the full his prestige as a local notable and man of *paideia* in order to gain tax exemptions for prospective monks and founders of poorhouses ... The guilds of [Caesarea] rallied behind him during a memorable confrontation with a

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[8] *Ibid.*, p. 755. This standard view can be found most recently in Wolfgang Liebeschuetz, "The End of the Ancient City", in *The City in Late Antiquity*, ed. John Rich (London, 1992), pp. 6-8.

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governor" (pp. 10 1-2). Brown omits to say that this "confrontation" occurred when the governor had had Basil stripped and was about to have him tortured, and that Basil himself offered no resistance whatever. By such means Mother Teresa could be made out as a self-publicist who takes tax deductions on her activities, goes on speaking tours to raise money, and wins lucrative prizes.

In Brown's characterization of Christian rhetoric, "we are dealing with what might be called a Christian populism, that flouted the culture of the governing classes and claimed to have brought, instead, simple words, endowed with divine authority, to the masses of the empire. To have presented Christianity in this manner was a masterstroke of writers who were, themselves, highly educated men" (p. 74). But to whom was this "populism" supposed to appeal? Not to educated pagans like Eunapius of Sardis, who saw it just as Brown does (p. 72). Not to uneducated people, who could not even understand formal rhetoric, composed in an Attic dialect far removed from spoken Greek. Educated Christians were already convinced. In any case, why should we assume that no educated man could possibly have had a genuine interest in religion or the welfare of the poor?

Brown's argument that such "populism" led to more autocracy also runs into problems. In Christian writings of the first half of the fifth century, according to him, "the power of the emperor was no longer presented as tethered by the silken ropes of an upper-class *paideia* ... The personal devotion of individual rulers, not their *paideia*, was held to bring felicity to the empire, in the form of the blessing of God" (p. 134). Yet with almost the sole exception of Julian, who was raised as a Christian, the pagan emperors of the third and fourth centuries had been rough-hewn soldiers without a trace of upper-class education. Their pagan panegyrists praised not their education but their devotion to the gods, which even Julian considered more important than education. The last emperor to live up to Brown's ideal, Marcus Aurelius, had died in 180, two hundred years before Basil of Caesarea.

Brown goes on to say that, by the early fifth century, "at a time when miracles, publicly performed and publicly proclaimed, were held to register the decisive impact of Christian bishops and holy men on the exercise of imperial power, Eunapius [of Sardis] and his circle saw nothing but power out of control. The ancient restraints of *logoi* [letters] no longer bound an increasingly tyrannical court" (p. 142). If true, this would contrast the cultured limited monarchy of the pagan Diocletian (284-305) with the tyranny of the Christian Arcadius (395-408). Yet, as every historian of the period knows, Diocletian was as absolute a military autocrat as the empire had ever seen, while Arcadius and all his fifth-century successors, though better educated than Diocletian, had a good deal less absolute power. Things were worse for

pagans like Eunapius, of course; but even remembering Hypatia, pagans under Arcadius and his successors suffered incomparably less than Christians had under Diocletian's persecutions.

What bothered Eunapius, and seems to bother Brown is that, by the fifth century, the empire's cultured elite was not valued quite as much as it had been. "On arriving at Constantinople, even a self-respecting local notable would find himself a *ptôchos*, a beggar dependent on the favour of imperial majesty. Hence the use of a language in relation to the imperial power that echoed the pathos of Christian appeals for compassion towards the poor increased at that time. A mystical solidarity was supposed to bind the emperor, despite his godlike majesty, to all his subjects. He shared with them the common frailty of human flesh" (p. 154). If so, the result would seem to be less autocracy, not more, but accompanied by more equality: "In a world more deeply divided than before—between the rich and the poor, the weak and the powerful—a sense of the shared frailty of human flesh offered, at least, a lowest common denominator of solidarity" (p. 156).

Although here Brown seems to be adopting the sort of educational snobbery that gives elitism a bad name, even the ideological change he postulates is very hard to demonstrate. Education continued to be valued by Christians, as Brown admits: "*Paideia* was there to stay" (p. 122). Though the city councils were in decline, for economic rather than ideological reasons, the fifth century still had plenty of rich and powerful men, most of them of senatorial rank. Yet Brown's evidence for a greater division between rich and poor is almost non-existent. He assumes that the numbers of urban poor grew simply because urban populations seem to have grown at the time; he gives no reason to think that the number of poor outstripped or even kept pace with the overall increase (p. 93). Brown's reference to prove that Theodosius I (379-95) raised taxes on city dwellers turns out to be a description of a tax that Theodosius levied at just the same rate as his predecessors (p. 105 and n. 182)[9].

Unlike Cameron, Brown recognizes that Christians, though they valued culture, did not consider it the most important thing, and did not claim that they did. He evidently thinks that what they really valued more than culture was their own power and influence, though what they claimed to value more was Christianity. He apparently thinks pagan rhetoricians were better because they did put the highest value on culture. But such a conclusion seems

[9] Cf. Brown's reference, Michael Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy, c. 300-1450* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 189, 175-8.

to underestimate the interest that they too had in power and influence, and to undervalue the attachment of many of them to paganism as a religion.

What Cameron and Brown share is an assumption that religion was not of primary importance to Christians in Late Antiquity. Thus Cameron says that from the time of St. Paul, Christianity's "history was as much about words and their interpretation as it was about belief or practice" (p. 12). Yet she cannot cite a single ancient writer who says anything of the sort, and those she does cite declare the contrary. Brown also contradicts the Christian (and pagan) sources: "Despite Christian claims to have triumphed over the gods of the city and despite the tenacious, if muffled, resentment of well-placed non-Christians throughout this period, the issue was not a straightforward conflict of religions. It was only presented as such by Christian sources. We are dealing, rather, with a struggle for a new style of urban leadership" (pp. 76-7). Brown blames early Christians for wrecking old ideals of culture and citizenship in order to take over city governments; Cameron gives early Christians credit for being interested in interesting things like words, pictures, storytelling, and sex. What rather appears from the sources is that Christians cared mostly about boring things like religious belief and practice and, in the course of spreading and practicing their faith, took over some civic functions that others had already abandoned.

But these not-very-novel conclusions tell us more about Late Antiquity than about the way we live now. Cameron and Brown have more modern interests. Brown writes: "I have tried to place the traditional culture of the upper classes in a social and political context which gives somewhat greater weight than has been given hitherto to its continued relevance and implicit goals" (pp. vii-viii). Cameron says: "In choosing to consider Christian rhetoric in its broadest sense ... I am conscious of reacting to late-twentieth-century concerns" (p. 16). At the end, she observes: "Whereas in modern intellectual circles Christian discourse is rarely acceptable as such, ironically *eros*, the discourse of desire, has filled the space left vacant" (p. 228). So she has given her audience what it will accept. She seems to have taken to heart the anonymous epigraph to one of her chapters: "Just tell a story. Make sure it's a good story. It doesn't even have to be a true story, but stories are what people want" (p. 89)[10].

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[10] I am unaware of the source of these words, which Cameron puts in italics. They do not come from the *Contra Celsum* of Origen, given as the reference for the rest of the epigraph (though even that is not Origen himself, but Origen's quotation of his adversary, Celsus).

In all this, I may seem to be breaking butterflies on the wheel, especially if poststructuralism is indeed going out of style. But books like these, in which prominent scholars use an innovative method to dismiss historical realities without discussing them, tend to win wide praise and no criticism. Then other scholars have a choice between rejecting this widely acclaimed scholarship, at the risk of being discarded as outdated, or accepting it, and trying to follow a map redrawn without regard for the real topography. Such books (and not just in the field of Late Antiquity) become obstacles to understanding their subjects.

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TAKING SOURCES ON THEIR OWN TERMS AND ON OURS: PETER BROWN'S LATE ANTIQUITY

Until about twenty years ago, most students of the pre-modern world used their source material for their own purposes, knew that was what they were doing, and made no apologies for doing it. Often they wholly disregarded the purpose for which their source was originally produced. When they did pay attention to its original purpose, they usually thought of that purpose as a drawback, since it led the source to distort or omit information that modern scholars would like to know. For example, they wished that hagiographers had been more interested in economics and less interested in saints[1].

More recently, historians have been consulting sources as a means of learning what ancient and medieval people themselves were interested in – that is, what the "mentalities" of the time were. In periods of few sources, this mostly means studying the thinking of the people who produced the sources. It also tends to mean concentrating on the ways in which the sources' attitudes differ from ours, since those differences should be the most characteristic of their age. This method, at least on the surface, seems to call for taking the sources on their own terms, and not ours.

New methods of using sources to study mentalities, especially when applied to the period variously called Late Antiquity or the Early Middle Ages, have yielded some intriguing results. Late ancient man appears to have been unlike twentieth-century man in a number of ways: much more influenced by symbols and ceremonies, much more respectful of his rulers and patrons, and particularly fascinated by holy men. Yet the scantiness of the sources is disturbing. The question may fairly be asked whether the attitudes identified in what are after all only a few sources of peculiar kinds are really representative of their times. It may also be asked whether the evidence that they give, which is of a rather elusive sort, is being read correctly – that is, presumably, on the sources' own terms.

In modern times, one often finds diaries, memoirs, letters and essays in which contemporaries explicitly say what is on their minds. No doubt such sources may mislead us, for various reasons; but their evidence is still a

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[1] This paper was originally delivered at a conference on *The Text and Texture of History* at the University of California at Los Angeles in May 1992.

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valuable starting point. During the latter part of the Middle Ages some texts of this sort are also to be found. In the earlier Middle Ages they generally are not; and even the few letters and memoirs that exist tend not to communicate the writer's feelings very clearly. Most late ancient and Byzantine letters are rhetorical and impersonal, and say little or nothing about the writers' feelings or opinions. Even the *Confessions* of St. Augustine are intended more to benefit the reader spiritually than to inform him about Augustine's personality.

For Late Antiquity, therefore, scholars must work hard to squeeze the most out of their few sources, particularly in going beyond politics to discuss society, culture, private life, ideology, and mentalities. In doing so, specialists led by Peter Brown have made efforts to add color and depth to our understanding of their subjects. Their sources include hagiography and oratory, to a somewhat lesser extent theology and epistolography, and to a smaller but still significant degree such odd genres as prophecies, penitentials, and dreambooks – or even non-literary sources like graffiti, papyrus receipts, and curse tablets.

By and large the results have met with approval and emulation. Use of the term "Late Antiquity" keeps spreading, until it is often used for the whole period once called the Early Middle Ages. Brown himself has used the label for times as late as the ninth century, without explicitly rejecting it for even later times in the East. This need not be a problem. My own opinion is that Byzantium essentially continued ancient society throughout its history, so that it was all part of Late Antiquity[2]. Its tradition was unbroken, and it always had plenty of holy men, ceremonies, and prophecies.

In any case, holiness, chastity, and the imperial mystique have become leading subjects for those who study the years from 300 to 1000 in both the Latin West and the Greek East. In scholarly circles, at least in America, Late Antiquity is now almost as famous for having powerful holy men as it is for the fall of Rome. Overall, a picture seems to be emerging of Late Antiquity, and all of early medieval and Byzantine history, as a time obsessed with something that may be called "the holy". Brown has entitled a collection of some of his most influential studies *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity.*

But that book simply collects articles on specific topics. No full picture of late ancient society has yet emerged, and what distinguished Late Antiquity from the later period has not been clarified. Yet one might think

[2] See Treadgold, *The Break in Byzantium and the Gap in Byzantine Studies,* in *Byzantinische Forschungen,* 15, 1990, pp. 289-316.

that the time has come to integrate these new findings into a coherent overview of what this period was like. Admittedly, syntheses are not currently the most popular form of historical writing, and the whole approach popularized by Peter Brown is somewhat impressionistic and selective, reflecting the incompleteness of the source material. Yet this strain in the scholarship of Late Antiquity owes much to the *Annales* school, which values a synthetic *histoire totale*. Similar findings for later periods have been successfully related to the rest of social, economic, and even political history. Late Antiquity remains an exception.

A case in point is the recently completed *History of Private Life*, edited by Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby. Unlike its later volumes, its first, *From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, tends to avoid comprehensive formulations. Rather it leaves what the introduction calls "deliberate gaps". "Too many centuries", the volume editor explains, "are known to us from sources so impoverished as to be lifeless. The fabric of this millennium is full of holes. It is an oversized and tattered greatcoat, which we felt would prove more serviceable if we cut it up into pieces of sensible size with some life still left in them"[3].

This is not the sort of greatcoat most of us would want to wear. Though scanty evidence presents serious difficulties for the historian of private life, the sources give rather more information about other sorts of social, economic, and political history. The rest of the period's history, drawn from conventional sources, should in principle be helpful in completing the picture of private life drawn from unconventional sources, and the result should be a reasonably coherent whole. If in practice the work of Brown's school turns out to be incompatible with the work of other scholars, one might reasonably suspect that something is wrong with one or the other.

That the attempt to blend the new history of Late Antiquity with the old has not really been made, or at least has not succeeded, naturally need not mean that it cannot succeed. My own conclusion, however, based on some experience, is that much of the new is inherently incompatible with the old. I have for several years been working on a general history of Byzantium, including both the Byzantine state and Byzantine society. In the process I have gone back to the sources as much as possible – thanks to the limited evidence, this is possible to a considerable extent. I have repeatedly had trouble substantiating the findings of Brown and his followers from the

[3] *A History of Private Life*, ed. Philippe Aries and Georges Duby, I: *From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, ed. Paul Veyne, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge, Mass., 1987, p. 1.

sources in general, as opposed to the selected sources on which those findings are based.

Admittedly absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, especially when the sources are as scattered as these. That something is attested by only a few sources, or even by no source at all, need not mean that it was not widely prevalent. Many of the most basic features of daily life can seem so obvious or trivial to contemporaries that they fail to mention them, or mention them only in passing or by implication. For example, we may assume that farmers have always worried about the weather and the crops, and that most people have always gossiped about who was sleeping with whom, whether the sources say so or not.

Moreover, much of what Brown and his school have emphasized seems well attested. Many saints' lives seem to show that from the fourth century onward a number of holy men enjoyed great influence. A great deal of court oratory and some descriptions of court ceremonial indicate that the emperor was revered as a sort of god on earth during the same period. A number of passages in theological works imply that pious Christians had a strong interest in sexual abstinence. Texts of several different sorts, including saints' lives, oratory, and theology, give an impression of an extremely solemn and serious world, which attached great importance to holiness, if by that we mean closeness to God. All these are major points made by the new scholarship of Late Antiquity.

Such views are on display in Peter Brown's contribution to *A History of Private Life,* a chapter simply entitled "Late Antiquity". This is perhaps Brown's clearest attempt to summarize the general applicability of his interpretations of Late Antiquity. Most of his other works, including his various short pieces and his recent *The Body and Society,* focus on particular topics without much explanation of how large these loomed in the consciousness of contemporaries. Brown's *The World of Late Antiquity* is more general, but less concerned with mentalities. His *Making of Late Antiquity* states clearly enough his belief in the central importance of the holy man, but does not illustrate it much in context.

In his chapter for *A History of Private Life,* Brown begins by stressing the special role of the aristocracy in the classical period, before Late Antiquity. He observes that aristocrats, unlike their inferiors, were much concerned with standards of proper decorum, amounting to a sort of "moral hypochondria"[4]. The spread of Christianity, however, deepened this obsession with morality, especially by emphasizing the afterlife, and

[4] Brown, *Late Antiquity*, in *A History of Private Life,* p. 241.

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extended it to people of every class. This was particularly true of sexual behavior, so that what people did with their bodies became a matter of concern to all of society – not, as before, only a matter of upper-class propriety. After the conversion of Constantine, these obsessive standards spread through society at large. They brought new practices ranging from elaborate ceremonies, as an anxious society rallied around its bishops and emperors, to increased almsgiving, designed to atone for sins.

In the East, Christians found some relief through the patronage of holy men, who advised them and prayed for them, while embodying an ideal to which ordinary men could hardly aspire. This made possible somewhat less stringent standards of sexual morality in the East than in the West, where holy men were less influential and theologians more puritanical. Brown summarizes in his last sentence: "[The western sources] communicate a strange sense that it is sexuality and not, as for Byzantines, haunted still by the mirage of the Paradise Regained in the deep desert, the darker and more faceless pride and violence of the world that has become the privileged concern, the horror, and even the delight, of the western European"[5].

Brown thus leaves no room for doubt that he considers these vital issues, not only for aristocrats or theologians but for all Christians, who by the sixth century were just about everyone. Such a diagnosis of spreading "moral hypochondria" would seem to explain obsessions with "the holy", holy men, evil demons, sexual sins, meticulous ceremonies, and so on. Brown, who has become known for a style that is more or less the scholarly equivalent of magic realism, makes it all sound fascinating. He never dwells on the strong undercurrent of gloominess and solemnity that he presupposes.

One might still think that such obsessions, which supposedly were the salient features of the late ancient mentality, could not have been much fun for those who had them. But Brown believes that, at least in the East, holy men did rather a good job of soothing the anxieties of the moral hypochondriacs who frequented what Brown calls their "well-furnished consulting rooms"[6]. So it seems that these obsessions are largely to be deduced because they explain the features of late antique society that Brown does stress, above all the importance of the holy man.

At this point we should consider what sort of evidence is needed to show that something was an important part of the mentality of an age, affecting most contemporaries of every social group. Although something

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[5] Brown, *Late Antiquity*, p. 311.

[6] Brown, *The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity*, in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley, 1982, p. 145 and 134.

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that really did typify an age might simply be taken for granted and seldom mentioned, the symptoms hardly could be, and Brown does not suppose that they were. Various passages do exist in the sources about holy men, chastity, ceremonies, and so on. But how sure can we be that those sources mean that these were really among the greatest and most constant interests of the people of Late Antiquity?

Let us begin with the holy man. For my own recent discussion of Late Antiquity, I separated the period into two parts, making a division in the middle of the fifth century. My reasons were, among others, that at that point the Christianization of the empire was nearly complete, the Western empire had fallen into terminal decline, and the Eastern empire had begun to grow more prosperous. I make no claims for the absolute validity of this division; in many ways the periods before and after 450 are similar. But the division does point up something interesting about holy men. While most of the holy men themselves lived before 450, most of the evidence for the importance of holy men dates from after 450, and deals with saints who had long been dead[7].

A notable characteristic of the period after 450 is a lack of commanding religious leadership. One sign of this is the surprising failure of the Church to resolve its controversy over Monophysitism. Monophysitism involved less serious theological issues than Arianism and Nestorianism, both of which were essentially closed questions by 450. The earlier controversies had chiefly been decided through the efforts of great religious leaders, like St. Athanasius, the Cappadocian Fathers, and St. Cyril of Alexandria, who had appeared at the right moment and persuaded the majority of the hierarchy to reach a clear decision. No such men appeared to end the Monophysite controversy.

Yet plausible candidates existed, and did try. Both the Monophysites and their opponents included men of theological acumen, blameless life, and even good will, who had the respect of their followers and wrote and preached extensively on the Monophysite controversy. But none enjoyed anything like the prestige of the great Fathers of the fourth and early fifth centuries. Not even their own partisans put them in the same class as the great saints of the earlier period.

Nor was it as if the holy men of this time neglected theology because they were too busy serving as patrons or psychiatrists for ordinary people, to general applause. From about 450 the individual holy man became much

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[7] See now Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society,* Stanford, 1997, pp. 259-64.

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rarer, as opposed to ordinary monks living together in monasteries. After the death in 459 of St. Symeon the Stylite, the first holy man to win fame by standing for years on a pillar, a few of his imitators made a certain impression; but the prestige of living holy men was not what it had been. Brown makes much of the *Life of St. Daniel the Stylite,* who lived on a pillar near Constantinople from 460 to 493. But a principal theme of this rather defensive biography is how God humiliated the many Christians who thought St. Daniel was a fraud.

Brown is naturally aware that not everyone thought much of the holy man. "The hermit", he writes, "had an uphill task to allay initial hostility and suspicion: he could be framed for murder; he was often held responsible for pregnancies among the village girls; he had the evil eye"[8]. In biographies of holy men, of course, such opinions are depicted as evil and malicious. But the purpose of a saint's life is to glorify its subject, as the hagiographer almost always declares in his preface. One did not investigate charges that the alleged holy man might actually have been a murderer, a seducer, or a charlatan.

As a matter of fact, the saints' lives do not make much of people who consulted holy men for spiritual advice or even for prayers, the sorts of patronage that Brown principally attributes to them. Although the saints were sometimes asked to cure what we would call mental illnesses, these were always treated not through counseling but through exorcism, the expulsion of supernatural demons who allegedly spoke in their own voices or were seen in one form or another. In these and in most other cases, the lives speak of people who wanted, and got, real miracles, typically the healing of purely physical ailments like blindness or paralysis. The biographer often adds that performing such miracles greatly increased the holy man's prestige. Unless we are prepared to believe that those miracles happened exactly as the lives say, perhaps we should also doubt that the holy men were as influential as the lives say.

Although after about 450 saints were venerated more than ever, the saints held in highest esteem were the martyrs and ascetics of an earlier era. These, like Menas, Thecla, or Cosmas and Damian, were the most popular subjects for hagiography. While in and around Constantinople half-legendary martyrs like Christopher, Demetrius, Euphemia, George, and Theodore each had several churches dedicated to them, Daniel the Stylite had just one[9].

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[8] Brown, *The Rise and Function of Holy Man*, p. 114.

[9] See R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin* I: *Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique*; III: *Les églises et les monastères*, 2e éd., Paris, 1969.

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Interestingly, most of the best-known churchmen, including some very prominent bishops and theologians, had no early lives written about them, while some very minor figures did.

The growth of the cult of the saints seems actually to have reduced respect for living holy men. They found it difficult to equal the reputed exploits of the martyrs under pagan emperors, the confessors under Arian emperors, and the first ascetics of the desert. While stylitism was a strenuous attempt to achieve new ascetic triumphs, its novelty soon wore off. Christians in need of spiritual patronage – that is, influential prayers to God on their behalf – naturally sought the intercession of established saints at shrines all over the empire. Relatively few people seem to have resorted to living ascetics of unproven sanctity. In any event, the most admirable holy men tended to be the least visible, and all but an occasional Daniel the Stylite lived far from the main centers of population.

The decline of living holy men was part of a wider phenomenon. The wealthy and comfortable Church of the years after 450 inevitably commanded less respect than the humble and embattled Church of the age of the persecutions. Much of this decline in prestige was temporary, the result of adjustment to the Church's recently acquired majority status. By about 600 we begin again to see religious leaders of real stature, like Gregory the Great and John the Faster, who were venerated as saints soon after their deaths. But most of the latter half of Late Antiquity is a time when saints were rarer than in almost any other part of Christian history[10]. And most of the saints of the former half of Late Antiquity were not hermits with well-appointed consulting rooms, but real hermits, or martyrs or bishops.

There certainly were some such holy hermits as Brown describes, and doubtless they comforted some of the people of rural Syria and Egypt with their prayers and spiritual advice. But it seems improbable that as much as 5% of the population of the Later Roman Empire ever saw a holy man. The main purpose of the biographies of holy hermits, which were always written after their deaths, was probably to encourage pilgrimages to their tombs in churches and monasteries. The hagiographers were usually connected with those places, and wrote out of a combination of motives ranging from personal admiration to a desire for donations. Their works really cannot

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[10] The paucity of contemporary lives of saints of the late fifth and sixth centuries is apparent from John Nesbitt, *A Geographical and Chronological Guide to Greek Saint Lives,* in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica,* 35, 1969, p. 443-89; the works of Cyril of Scythopolis are the almost unique exceptions in Nesbitt's catalogue.

demonstrate Brown's sweeping conclusion: "The predominance of the holy man ... marked out Late Antiquity as a distinct phase of religious history"[11].

The subject of late ancient sexuality, on which Brown has written a lengthy book, *The Body and Society,* is too large to treat in detail here. Despite his conclusion to his chapter for the *History of Private Life*, Brown does qualify his all-embracing claims for sexual renunciation as one of the defining features of Late Antiquity. After his discussion of the injunctions to chastity of St. Augustine, Brown quite reasonably adds, "Whether such bleak and novel thoughts cast a chill over the sexual relations of late Roman couples in the West is another matter. One suspects that they did not"[12].

Apparently many of the ideas of chastity mentioned by Brown, supported by citations from the Greek and Latin Fathers, made relatively little impression on ordinary believers. But one may doubt how large such questions loomed in the consciousness even of the theologians. The subject is not among the most common in their works. They almost always make clear that sexual renunciation is of no importance to them in itself, but only as a means of avoiding distractions from the service of God. In other words, unlike Brown and most of the rest of us, they were not much interested in sex, and were very much interested in God.

As far as I know, early theologians never use Brown's favorite term, "the holy", in that sense of the word. One might render "the holy" in Greek as *to hosion,* but when theologians use that term they mean not "the holy" but "the divinity"[13]. What early theologians do talk about all the time is God, whom Brown seldom mentions. Of course one need not believe in God to study early Christianity; but to study early Christianity with profit one should not forget that the early Christians did believe in God, and considered him extremely important. This may have led to symptoms that we might consider "moral hypochondria"; but to the believer anything that separated him from God was a perfectly real disease, and a potentially fatal one.

Faith in God is, I think, the main reason that Late Antiquity was not really as gloomy, solemn, and anxious a time as Brown's analysis would seem to indicate. Though Brown appears to think of Christian practices mainly as means of calming moral anxieties, I have noted that not even he concludes that Late Antiquity was especially neurotic and morose in reality. The more optimistic view that appears in most Christian sources is that God is central – and reliable and good – while such things as sexual renunciation, holy men,

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[11] *The Rise and Function of the Holy Man,* p. 151.

[12] *Late Antiquity,* p. 309-310.

[13] Cf. G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon,* Oxford, 1961, p. 976.

Interestingly, most of the best-known churchmen, including some very prominent bishops and theologians, had no early lives written about them, while some very minor figures did.

The growth of the cult of the saints seems actually to have reduced respect for living holy men. They found it difficult to equal the reputed exploits of the martyrs under pagan emperors, the confessors under Arian emperors, and the first ascetics of the desert. While stylitism was a strenuous attempt to achieve new ascetic triumphs, its novelty soon wore off. Christians in need of spiritual patronage – that is, influential prayers to God on their behalf – naturally sought the intercession of established saints at shrines all over the empire. Relatively few people seem to have resorted to living ascetics of unproven sanctity. In any event, the most admirable holy men tended to be the least visible, and all but an occasional Daniel the Stylite lived far from the main centers of population.

The decline of living holy men was part of a wider phenomenon. The wealthy and comfortable Church of the years after 450 inevitably commanded less respect than the humble and embattled Church of the age of the persecutions. Much of this decline in prestige was temporary, the result of adjustment to the Church's recently acquired majority status. By about 600 we begin again to see religious leaders of real stature, like Gregory the Great and John the Faster, who were venerated as saints soon after their deaths. But most of the latter half of Late Antiquity is a time when saints were rarer than in almost any other part of Christian history[10]. And most of the saints of the former half of Late Antiquity were not hermits with well-appointed consulting rooms, but real hermits, or martyrs or bishops.

There certainly were some such holy hermits as Brown describes, and doubtless they comforted some of the people of rural Syria and Egypt with their prayers and spiritual advice. But it seems improbable that as much as 5% of the population of the Later Roman Empire ever saw a holy man. The main purpose of the biographies of holy hermits, which were always written after their deaths, was probably to encourage pilgrimages to their tombs in churches and monasteries. The hagiographers were usually connected with those places, and wrote out of a combination of motives ranging from personal admiration to a desire for donations. Their works really cannot

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[10] The paucity of contemporary lives of saints of the late fifth and sixth centuries is apparent from John Nesbitt, *A Geographical and Chronological Guide to Greek Saint Lives,* in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica,* 35, 1969, p. 443-89; the works of Cyril of Scythopolis are the almost unique exceptions in Nesbitt's catalogue.

demonstrate Brown's sweeping conclusion: "The predominance of the holy man ... marked out Late Antiquity as a distinct phase of religious history"[11].

The subject of late ancient sexuality, on which Brown has written a lengthy book, *The Body and Society,* is too large to treat in detail here. Despite his conclusion to his chapter for the *History of Private Life*, Brown does qualify his all-embracing claims for sexual renunciation as one of the defining features of Late Antiquity. After his discussion of the injunctions to chastity of St. Augustine, Brown quite reasonably adds, "Whether such bleak and novel thoughts cast a chill over the sexual relations of late Roman couples in the West is another matter. One suspects that they did not"[12].

Apparently many of the ideas of chastity mentioned by Brown, supported by citations from the Greek and Latin Fathers, made relatively little impression on ordinary believers. But one may doubt how large such questions loomed in the consciousness even of the theologians. The subject is not among the most common in their works. They almost always make clear that sexual renunciation is of no importance to them in itself, but only as a means of avoiding distractions from the service of God. In other words, unlike Brown and most of the rest of us, they were not much interested in sex, and were very much interested in God.

As far as I know, early theologians never use Brown's favorite term, "the holy", in that sense of the word. One might render "the holy" in Greek as *to hosion,* but when theologians use that term they mean not "the holy" but "the divinity"[13]. What early theologians do talk about all the time is God, whom Brown seldom mentions. Of course one need not believe in God to study early Christianity; but to study early Christianity with profit one should not forget that the early Christians did believe in God, and considered him extremely important. This may have led to symptoms that we might consider "moral hypochondria"; but to the believer anything that separated him from God was a perfectly real disease, and a potentially fatal one.

Faith in God is, I think, the main reason that Late Antiquity was not really as gloomy, solemn, and anxious a time as Brown's analysis would seem to indicate. Though Brown appears to think of Christian practices mainly as means of calming moral anxieties, I have noted that not even he concludes that Late Antiquity was especially neurotic and morose in reality. The more optimistic view that appears in most Christian sources is that God is central – and reliable and good – while such things as sexual renunciation, holy men,

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[11] *The Rise and Function of the Holy Man,* p. 151.
[12] *Late Antiquity,* p. 309-310.
[13] Cf. G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon,* Oxford, 1961, p. 976.

demons, prophecies, and so on can be problematic but are secondary. This may seem a less interesting view than Brown's, because it is neither novel nor modern. On the other hand, today many of us find neuroses much more familiar and comprehensible motives than faith in God.

What Brown seems to be maintaining is that the people of Late Antiquity behaved very differently from ourselves, but actually had motives much like our own. He suggests this in the conclusion to his *The Body and Society*: "To modern persons, whatever their religious beliefs, the Early Christian themes of sexual renunciation, of continence, celibacy, and the virgin life have come to carry with them icy overtones. ... Historians must bring to them their due measure of warm, red blood. ... When such an offering is made, the chill shades may speak to us again, and perhaps more gently than we had thought they might, in the strange tongue of a long-lost Christianity. Whether they will say anything of help or comfort for our own times the readers of this book must decide for themselves"[14].

By this point Brown seems to be taking the sources very much on our terms, not on theirs. His contention appears to be not precisely that early Christians were obsessed with anxieties about sex, but that many of us are, and may be consoled to find that those Christians had problems like ours, even though they sought to solve the problems by different means. One who takes the sources more on their own terms, however, would be more likely to conclude that the people of Late Antiquity behaved differently in this respect because they had quite different concerns and motives. I have little doubt that this was the case.

On the other hand, in some other ways Brown and his school may have overemphasized how different Late Antiquity was. One of these is the matter of ceremonial. Some of Brown's followers have attached great importance to imperial court ceremonies[15]. But Brown is aware that these rituals reached only a tiny proportion of the population. He has written, for example: "The ceremonial life of the East Roman towns had always happened a little below the brittle rituals of the capital. The charioteer, the athlete and the gladiator were more firmly rooted [than the consul] in the imagination of the average man"[16].

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[14] Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, New York, 1988, p. 446-447.

[15] See particularly Sabine MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1981).

[16] Brown, *The Rise and Function of the Holy Man*, p. 137.

Brown nonetheless insists that in Late Antiquity public amusements were primarily ceremonies, and ceremonies of great and grave significance. In his chapter in the *History of Private Life*, he observes, "The circus, the theater (many altered at this time to accommodate ever more grandiose displays, such as water battles and wild beast hunts), and, most notoriously in Constantinople, the hippodrome replaced the ancient spaces traditionally associated with pagan public worship as the places where the loyalty of the city to its rulers, and so to its own survival, was solemnly expressed"[17].

This fits well enough with the idea that the people of Late Antiquity were obsessed by various anxieties, though in this case the anxieties seem to have been about survival rather than about morality. Yet it strains credulity to think that it was mainly to express loyalty to their rulers that people went to see horse races and wrestling matches, or theater skits in which women took off their clothes. Among the performances that according to Brown civic officials "donated ... to the everlasting glory of themselves and of their city" was the future empress Theodora's act as "a striptease dancer"[18]. Such entertainments were not at all "solemn", and their audience, though glad enough that the government was paying for them, was not particularly loyal. On the contrary, the theater and especially the Hippodrome gave rise to most of the worst riots of Late Antiquity and Byzantium, many of which were directed against the rulers and some of which explicitly tried to overthrow them.

Though many scholars used to attribute an overtly political significance to the actions of these theater and circus fans, two well documented books by Alan Cameron have convinced most of us that the fans' real interests were secondarily in violence and primarily in sports – not to speak of voyeurism[19]. These may not be very refined interests, and we scholars may not share them, but as Cameron has pointed out they are still well represented among the populations of many modem countries. No doubt social tensions can be in the background when spectators riot at sports matches or popular performances; but the main reason the average spectator goes to them is simply that he enjoys them.

In Late Antiquity, when most of the fans were illiterate, we cannot expect to find many texts expressing enthusiasm for athletics and popular entertainment as such. Yet some do exist, especially if we count graffiti,

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[17] Brown, *Late Antiquity*, p. 273.

[18] Brown, *Late Antiquity*, p. 245.

[19] Alan Cameron, *Porphyrius the Charioteer*, Oxford, 1973, and *Circus Factions*, Oxford, 1976.

epigrams in the *Greek Anthology*, and the inscriptions for the statues of celebrated charioteers. And the official source material emphasizing the ceremonial aspects of the games is itself rather thin. It shows that the spectators ritually acclaimed the men who put on the games; but that scarcely implies that what the spectators liked about the games was the opportunity to acclaim their rulers there. Official orators did say such things; but these statements look very much like the sort of official oratory that St. Augustine (a former orator) says neither the speaker nor his audience believed[20].

In short, although the aspects of Late Antiquity that Brown and his followers have emphasized can be found in the sources, those features do not seem to have been very important in late ancient society. That they were minor, peripheral, and partly misleading aspects is probably the reason that studying them has failed to contribute to a coherent overview of the period. Brown's effort to provide such an overview for *A History of Private Life* is rather half-hearted, and the sweeping statements it forces him to make are not really typical of his earlier work, which is more cautious.

What Brown has mostly done is to pick out from the sources some features of Late Antiquity that seem particularly intriguing to the general educated public, and to explain them in terms that that public finds satisfactory. This is taking the sources very much on our contemporary terms, distorting the late ancient evidence in the process. And here I should acknowledge that though Brown has often been praised for revealing the true mentalities that lie behind his sources, he himself has not put much stress on looking for their real intentions.

In any case, one could scarcely expect Brown to take his sources on their own terms in any literal sense. He could hardly do so without (at least in imagination) adopting the beliefs and values of early Christians. The author of the *Life of Daniel the Stylite,* for instance, intended to convince us not that holy men in general were important in his society, but rather that Daniel as an individual was a great man of God. If we are unwilling to believe in his hero's merits, or do not even believe in God, the hagiographer would condemn us as lost souls, and would have nothing more to say to us.

In the end, we always take sources on our own terms. We want to find something in them that interests us; otherwise we would probably choose other sources to study. It is an interesting fact that the period from 300 to 800, and later in the Byzantine East, displays many features that seem odd to us today, both in people's actions and in their thoughts. In many ways this is a

[20] Augustine, *Confessions* VI.6, a passage that MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony,* p. 1, is eager to sweep under the rug.

more alien period to us than Antiquity itself, before Christianity arrived in force. Even awareness of the Christianity that still exists in our society, so much weaker in its effects on most people's thinking and behaviour, can easily lead us to minimize the influence of early Christianity, rationalizing or psychoanalyzing it away.

Reconstructing what this period was really like, using all available sources, can lead to conclusions just as intriguing as those of Brown and his school, but more complex ones. By and large, we are likely to find that when early Christians behaved differently from modern people their motives were also different, though when they behaved similarly to modem people their motives were probably more similar. If so, we should be able to identify some truly characteristic differences in thinking, and not merely peculiarities of behavior. Then the mentalities we discover will really be those of Late Antiquity, and not just reflections of our own concerns.

Taking sources out of context and explaining them in isolation has of course been a fashionable method for about thirty years. Yet that fashion now seems to have passed its peak in more developed fields than late ancient and medieval history. The selective approach to texts produces results that at first appear startling and impressive. They can be imitated, and they are. But before long they prove impossible to build upon, since they cannot account for most of the evidence beyond their selected sources. The *Annales* school in general has been able to make ever broader applications of its findings, using more and more of the available evidence[21]. Whether the new interpreters of Late Antiquity can do the same remains open to question.

[21] Cf. the later chapter in *A History of Private Life* by Evelyne Patlagean, *Byzantium in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries,* which is a more balanced and better documented treatment of a less studied field.

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WHY WRITE A NEW HISTORY OF BYZANTIUM?

For the last ten years, I have been writing a new history of Byzantium. Now completed, it is entitled *A History of the Byzantine State and Society,* runs to a bit over a thousand pages, and is scheduled for publication in June[1]. You will probably believe me when I say that it was difficult to write, and that I had at least a dim conception of how difficult it would be when I decided to write it. From the start, however, I believed that there were good reasons for doing it, and, luckily for my peace of mind, I still believe in those reasons. Yet the fact that no one had written a similar book for sixty years, since George Ostrogorsky finished his *History of the Byzantine State,* suggests that the need for it was not obvious to everyone.

More than twenty years ago, Alexander Kazhdan, a Byzantinist for whom I have great respect, observed that even then the absence of a new political history of Byzantium was "surprising". His explanation was not that Ostrogorsky remained satisfactory, but that "our generation does not relish the history of wars, upheavals and religious disputes. We no longer believe that the core of the past can be reached through even the finest analysis of political events. Instead, the fashion is for the history of civilization, the history of man in a broader perspective"[2]. Kazhdan's comments do help explain why no one has recently written a general history of Byzantine politics alone; my own work treats not only the state but society as well. Yet no one had written a broader history of this sort, either.

To be precise, two multivolume histories have appeared recently, both essentially limited to political history and neither well regarded by most scholars. The three volumes by John Julius Norwich (recently made available in a one-volume abridgement) make, in the author's words, "no claim to academic scholarship"[3]. In fact, they ignore most recent research and are largely compiled from Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman*

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[1] Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford, 1997). The present lecture is a revised and much expanded version of my article, "Observations on Finishing a General History of Byzantium", in *Aëtos: Studies in Honor of Cyril Mango* (Stuttgart, 1998), pp. 342-53.

[2] A. Kazhdan, "Approaches to the History of Byzantine Civilization: From Krause to Beck and Mango", in A. Kazhdan and S. Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 1.

[3] J. J. Norwich, *Byzantium* (3 vols.: London, 1988-96), with the quotation from the first volume, p. 28.

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Empire. Aikaterene Christophilopoulou's history of Byzantium is incomplete both in its Greek original and in its English translation and clearly shows its origins as a teaching manual[4]. Neither Norwich nor Christophilopoulou has really come to terms with modern Byzantine scholarship, which in turn has more or less ignored both of them.

Several other long and serious general books on Byzantium have been written, none much like my own. Probably the most important, published in 1991, is the three-volume *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium,* edited and in large part written by Alexander Kazhdan himself. Unlike most such dictionaries, it has a reasonably consistent point of view, briefly outlined by Kazhdan under "Byzantium, history of". The articles on individual emperors could even be read in order as a political history; but it would be a peculiar one, paying disproportionate attention to personalities and to minor rulers, given that every emperor's article is about a column long. The *Dictionary*'s alphabetical format seldom allows chronological treatment, or much discussion of connections between social and political developments. All of which is simply to say that this excellent dictionary is not a continuous history. No coherent narrative could provide as much detail as the *Dictionary* does on such topics as costume or food – to say nothing of concepts like "risk" or "sin". But just as in most respects a history cannot substitute for a dictionary, a dictionary cannot replace a history.

Another approach can be found in Cyril Mango's *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome,* published in 1980. This is the latest and best of a series of analytical surveys of Byzantine civilization, and it gives an inspired picture of Byzantine society and culture[5]. Kazhdan has criticized the book, gently, for implying that Byzantine culture did not change much over its millennial history, even though Mango actually believes that Byzantium changed a great deal. Kazhdan suggests that the "difficulty arises from the structure of Mango's book rather than from its content"[6]. Since each of Mango's fourteen topical chapters covers the whole Byzantine period, his descriptions of such things as Byzantine monasticism, eschatology, or literature cannot show in

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[4] A. Christophilopoulou, *Byzantine History,* 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1986-93; no more published), trans. of same, *Byzantinē Historia,* 3 vols., ending with 1204 (Athens, 1975-2001; no more published).

[5] Notable among its predecessors are A. Guillou, *La civilisation byzantine* (Paris, 1974), L. Bréhier, *Le monde byzantin* (3 vols., Paris, 1949-50), and N. H. Baynes and H. S. B. Moss, *Byzantium: An Introduction to East Roman Civilization* (Oxford, 1948).

[6] Kazhdan, "Approaches to Byzantine Civilization", pp. 15-16.

any detail how each of these developed over time, much less how each related to the others or to politics. This is an inevitable disadvantage of topical rather than chronological organization. Although a topical survey can describe individual aspects in a depth that no history can match, it too is no substitute for a history.

There is one Byzantine history more recent than Ostrogorsky's that might seem to combine all the elements one could wish: the second edition of the fourth volume of the *Cambridge Medieval History,* written by a team of over two dozen scholars and published in two parts in 1966 and 1967[7]. Yet it has never enjoyed particularly high esteem as a whole, though some of its chapters are very well done. For one thing, it lacks any consistent focus or overall point of view. Its first part, *Byzantium and Its Neighbours,* devotes more space to the neighbors than to Byzantium, while each account of Byzantine relations with another power is told from a different perspective. All these chapters suffer from the usual disadvantages of topical organization, as do the chapters in the second part, *Government, Church and Civilization.* Another reason for the book's lack of coherence lies in its being a collaboration, with a different author for nearly every chapter. Even though Kazhdan partly overcame a similar problem by his vigorous editing of the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium,* a work by many authors faces obvious obstacles in presenting general ideas.

This brings us back to Ostrogorsky's *History,* which is still the reigning political history of Byzantium, and justly admired. Its original German version was completed in 1937 and published in 1940[8]. Revised editions appeared in 1952 and 1963, each of which was soon translated into English and other languages. The basic organization and conception of the book, however, remained unchanged by the revisions. Moreover, the book was planned, as a volume of the *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft,* to focus on politics and to pay only minimal attention to the period before the year 610. Ostrogorsky, not considering 610 an appropriate starting date for Byzantine history, included a brief introductory chapter that begins with the foundation of Constantinople in 324. In his narrative he even tried, as he put it, "to bring out the essential interdependence of events at home and abroad,

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[7] *The Cambridge Medieval History,* vol. 4, 2nd ed., ed. J. H. Hussey (Cambridge, 1966-67).

[8] For his date of completion, see Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des Byzantinischen Staates* (Munich, 1940), p. ix.

political, ecclesiastical, and cultural"[9]. Yet his treatment of social and cultural history is very sparse. Moreover, given that even the thirty-four years since the book's last revision have been eventful ones in Byzantine scholarship, most Byzantinists recognize that Ostrogorsky's book has become largely outdated.

In writing my own book, I parted company with Ostrogorsky in several ways, beyond simply taking subsequent research into account. I gave the early Byzantine period much more space than Ostrogorsky had been able to do, the middle Byzantine period about the same space, and the late Byzantine period somewhat less (Ostrogorsky, who finished writing his history in Belgrade, had given relations with the Serbs particular prominence). My plan was to produce a book only a little longer than Ostrogorsky's, while assigning each period treatment more nearly corresponding to its importance (at least for a non-Serbian readership). In the end, my book turned out to be about a third longer than Ostrogorsky's[10]. Because my narrative chapters were almost exactly as long as his, the extra length was due to six long general chapters for which I used a topical format. For those who find that a thousand pages is more Byzantine history than they want, I have recently arranged to write a history that will cover the same ground but be about a third as long[11].

Much like Ostrogorsky, I tried to write a chronological account that would integrate political, social, religious, cultural, and economic history as much as possible. In practice, however, for me as for him, this turned out to be possible only to a limited extent. Detailed chronological accounts must deal with events that happened at fairly specific times; but most social, religious, cultural, and economic developments occurred gradually, often independently of any specific event. A related problem is that conditions were often very different in different parts of the Byzantine Empire. Yet making space for frequent discussions of what was happening in each region would have rendered the narrative almost impossible to follow.

I therefore divided my book into six chronological parts, covering, on average, about two hundred years apiece. This span seemed long enough to

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[9] Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (New Brunswick, 1969), p. vii (from the preface to the first edition).

[10] I exclude my illustrations and maps, which add about 150 pages. Ostrogorsky's German editions are not illustrated, and the illustrations in his American edition appear on unnumbered pages.

[11] This book has now been published as *A Concise History of Byzantium* (New York and Basingstoke, 2001).

permit generalizations about gradual developments, and short enough to allow the generalizations to be fairly specific. Each part consists of three or four narrative chapters, followed by a longer topical chapter on society in general. Each of these topical chapters first surveys the empire's regions one by one, then discusses social structures, religion, culture, and economics. Although similar formats have been used for general histories of other civilizations, for a general history of Byzantium this sort of organization seems to be a novelty. In fact, the very idea that most aspects of Byzantine civilization changed much over time is still disputed, and even those who believe in changes argue over what the changes were.

My choice of periods for Byzantine history mattered more for me than Ostrogorsky's or Kazhdan's did for them, because my periods determined not just divisions in my narrative but the scope of my general chapters. The periods had to define stages of development in both political and social history. I also had to decide where Byzantine history started. The term "Byzantine Empire" is a modern one, since the Byzantines themselves always called their empire the Roman Empire, of which it was a direct continuation. Ostrogorsky took the common-sense view that the Byzantine period began with the foundation of Constantinople in 324 on the site of the ancient city of Byzantium. However, since Ostrogorsky wrote, Cyril Mango and Gilbert Dagron have demonstrated that Constantinople did not become anything like a true capital for the eastern Roman Empire until more than fifty years after its foundation[12]. Besides, few scholars think that having Constantinople for a capital was the most important distinction between Byzantium and the earlier Roman Empire.

Since Ostrogorsky's time a number of historians, led by Kazhdan, have suggested that the true beginning of the Byzantine period came in the middle of the seventh century. They note not just the empire's loss of Syria and Egypt to the Arabs and most of the Balkans to the Slavs, but a severe contraction in the size of the empire's cities under the pressure of enemy raids. In their opinion, the empire became so much less urbanized, and its economy so much less monetized, as to make it essentially unlike what it had been in ancient times. They accordingly favor calling the empire "Roman" before the seventh century and "Byzantine" afterwards. Others, myself among them, regard this case as somewhat overdrawn. Since everyone agrees that

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[12] Cyril Mango, *Le développement urbain de Constantinople* (Paris, 1985); Gilbert Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale: Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1984).

important changes occurred in the seventh century, the dispute is over the extent of the changes and how much significance to attach to them[13].

Despite his views on the seventh century, Kazhdan did not go so far as to exclude the earlier period from his *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium,* where the first emperor given a regular biographical entry is Diocletian, emperor from 284. Diocletian's reign is also the point where I begin my history, for several reasons. First, within a year of his accession Diocletian made an administrative division of the Roman Empire into eastern and western parts that turned out to be lasting, the eastern part becoming what we call Byzantium. Diocletian also made far-reaching reforms in the army, bureaucracy, and system of taxation, the effects of which continued far into the Byzantine period. Though the time before him was an age of anarchy, he established a stability and a much more intrusive government that continued after him. Finally, the simple fact that his reign is the first that included some characteristically Byzantine elements makes it a good place to start, because any later starting point would require many awkward references back to him.

Although I agree with Ostrogorsky, Kazhdan, Mango, and most other Byzantinists that the early seventh century was an important turning point, the span of more than three hundred years from 284 to the early seventh century seemed too long to analyze as a single period. I therefore divided it at the mid-fifth century, again for several reasons. Before that time the spread of Christianity and relations with the Western Roman Empire were major themes in Byzantine history, while afterward Christianity had firmly established itself and the Western Empire collapsed and disappeared. The economic picture is also different before and after the mid-fifth century. Before, the eastern empire's economy was plainly struggling, and had probably registered at least a small decline since 284. By the mid-fifth century, however, the archeological record shows signs of economic growth, which continued for almost a century until it was cut short, evidently by the bubonic plague. My reason for not adopting the plague as a division is that its impact can best be shown by discussing how the empire was before, during, and after it.

In the seventh century the Persian and Arab invasions brought a crisis even worse than the plague, endangering the empire's very existence. My next period is therefore the empire's struggle for survival, up to the time when that survival was no longer in doubt. The date I chose for the passing of the crisis

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[13] For an account of the controversy, see my "The Break in Byzantium and the Gap in Byzantine Studies", *Byzantinische Forschungen* 15 (1990), pp. 289-316 [Study 1 in this book].

was around 780, which in a previous book called *The Byzantine Revival* I argued was the beginning of an economic and cultural recovery. In this I disagreed with Ostrogorsky and the editors of the *Cambridge Medieval History,* who chose 842 as the beginning of the revival; Kazhdan is somewhat noncommittal, putting the "first beginnings" between 800 and 850[14]. As with my choice for a starting date for Byzantine history, the difference may simply be my preference for starting to discuss a gradual development with the first definite beginnings rather than a more advanced stage.

Like just about everyone, I date the end of Byzantium's military recovery to 1025, when major new conquests stopped after roughly doubling the empire's size. The subsequent period used to be considered one of unrelieved decline; but recently a consensus has been emerging – to which I subscribe – that economic expansion continued despite political setbacks that included the loss of inland Asia Minor by 1081. The loss of the interior of Asia Minor represented a grave political and military failure, but not a great economic blow, because the Anatolian plateau was a relatively poor region. As I note in my book on *Byzantium and Its Army,* this loss was accompanied by the virtual disintegration of the Byzantine army, which was never the same afterward[15]. Otherwise Byzantium was not greatly changed, because it kept most of its wealthiest provinces. The first setback to have such profound results that it spelled the end of an age was the fall of Constantinople to the knights of the Fourth Crusade in 1204.

With the fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders, what had been Byzantium split into four main parts: the Crusaders' Latin Empire and three Byzantine splinter states, each of which soon claimed to be the successor to the Byzantine Empire. One of them, which we call the Empire of Nicaea after its capital, eventually captured Constantinople, persuading modem scholars to call it the restored Byzantine Empire. This empire was indeed a lineal descendant of the state the Crusaders had dismembered in 1204, and at first held more than half of Byzantium's old territories. It lasted almost two hundred years, and only succumbed to the Turks after being crippled by a recurrence of the bubonic plague – the Black Death. Yet there were two other lineal descendants of Byzantium, one of which, the little Empire of Trebizond, actually survived eight years after the Turks took Constantinople in 1453. Since my book includes some treatment of all three successor states, it ends only with the fall of Trebizond in 1461.

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[14] Kazhdan, "Byzantium, History of", *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* I, p. 346.

[15] Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army* (Stanford, 1995), pp. 214-19.

The attention I pay to economics, and to differences between regions of the empire and its successor states, seem to help resolve some of the old disputes over Byzantine decline. For example, some historians have argued that abandonment of land was a general problem in the fourth and fifth centuries because of evidence from the Balkans; a regional survey reveals that the Balkans were exceptional, because unlike the rest of the eastern empire they suffered constantly from enemy raids. Other historians have argued that the empire was still prosperous in the late sixth century because of evidence from inland Syria; but this too was an exceptional region, because its dry climate was inhospitable to the rats that carried the plague.

Still other historians have argued over evidence that seems to show both Byzantine strength and weakness in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; but as soon as economic prosperity is clearly distinguished from military power, it becomes clear that the empire was at once economically strong and militarily weak. The same was true for most of the rest of the empire's history, and explains why the Ottoman Turks, by devoting more resources to their army than the Byzantines had done, built a far stronger empire on the same land. I consequently disagree with the usual judgments that Byzantium was doomed long before it fell. Its demise became foreseeable only after the Black Death devastated it in 1347, while largely sparing its Turkish enemies.

In a book entitled *A History of the Byzantine State and Society,* I obviously needed to come to conclusions, however tentative, about Byzantine social history. My treatment may well seem unsatisfactory to those historians who want some clear theoretical model to apply to all of Byzantine society. My own view is that no such model is applicable. What many scholars are looking for seems to be a system of class divisions of the sort found in traditional or Marxist interpretations of Western European feudalism. But Byzantium, like the ancient world, had nothing much like feudalism, and its class divisions, though they certainly existed, seem to have been relatively unimportant. Several class-based interpretations of Byzantine history seem to be almost entirely unfounded.

The recent theory that in Late Antiquity bishops led some sort of social revolution against the secular ruling class of city councilors seems to be based on a series of misinterpretations. It idealizes the city councilors and ignores overwhelming evidence that they were extremely eager to abandon their financially burdensome duties, some of which the Church assumed by

default[16]. Another idea that seems baseless, but has long been standard and was adopted by Ostrogorsky, is that the twelfth century was an age of domination by aristocratic landholders[17]. There were many aristocratic landholders then, but they showed no more sense of class solidarity than the earlier city councilors had had. Although the ruling dynasty of the Comneni were indeed landholding aristocrats, they seem to have had scarcely any interest in helping others of their class, who in turn had no love for the Comneni.

Later, in the thirteenth century, some historians have seen class warfare between rich and poor in the Byzantine civil war between supporters and opponents of the emperor John VI Cantacuzenus. What the sources show instead is a dynastic conflict with some elements of a struggle between the towns and the countryside; rich landholders and the rural poor largely backed Cantacuzenus, while rich merchants and the urban poor largely opposed him. The war was between two coalitions, each of which included both rich and poor. In short, the Byzantines seem to have cared much less about class than some modem historians think they should have.

At this point, let me stress that I am well aware that my book is very far from being definitive. Obviously I corrected mistakes when I identified them, but I often made suggestions when the evidence was unclear, because the alternative was to avoid some important questions altogether. As I observe in my preface, "about a quarter of the statements that I qualify by [the word] 'probably' are probably wrong"[18]. It will surely be my fate, as it has often been Ostrogorsky's, to be quoted by others in order to be refuted by evidence that I overlooked or misunderstood. Specialists who know their parts of Byzantine history better than I do are particularly likely to find the mistakes in their specialties.

However, this is one of the best reasons for producing new general histories, at least every sixty years or so. Writing a general history is a bit like writing a complete translation of a text. Monographs, like paraphrases, can fudge the hard parts to hide ignorance and misunderstanding. A comprehensive history, even by its weaknesses and errors, can reveal where the worst problems are. Many of the problems that remain in Byzantine

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[16] See my "Imaginary Early Christianity", *International History Review* 15 (1993), pp. 535-45 [Study 3 in this book], reviewing Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity* (Madison, 1992).

[17] Thus in his history Ostrogorsky entitled his treatment of the period from 1081 to 1204 "The Rule of the Military Aristocracy".

[18] Treadgold, *History* (as in n. 1 above), p. xvi.

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history have no doubt escaped my notice and will be seen only by critics who read my book. But some of the problems seemed clear enough to me as I wrote, and I either mentioned them in my text, notes, or bibliography, or reserved them for treatment in another context, such as this lecture. So, in the time that remains, I would like to draw upon what I learned from writing my history to make some general remarks on the present state of Byzantine studies.

My first observation, which applies to many other fields as well, is that writing a survey of any kind is more difficult than writing a monograph, given comparable lengths and comparable conscientiousness. Those who write specialized studies can choose topics that interest them, and can ignore material unrelated to their chosen topics. But those who write general surveys must study many topics, including some not of much interest to them, and a vast body of secondary literature which, though repetitive on some subjects, neglects others that need to be treated in a survey. As the specialist works, he becomes more familiar and comfortable with his subject. The generalist, however, if he is ever to finish writing, as soon as he becomes fairly familiar with one topic must move on to the next, which is again unfamiliar. Unlike the specialist, the generalist must constantly decide what to put in and what to leave out, and must find ways to combine into a coherent composition things that really have little to do with each other.

Now I understand why Richard Krautheimer began the preface to his survey of Byzantine architecture with the words, "This book was difficult to write, and I can truthfully say that I have never faced a harder task"[19]. Ostrogorsky, who finished writing the first edition of his Byzantine history at age 35, reportedly said in later life that he was glad he had written it when he was young, because he would never have dared to do it when he was older[20]. Much of the reason that Ostrogorsky's survey has remained unreplaced for so long is surely that with the growth of the secondary literature surveys have become increasingly hard to write. To survey Byzantine history today requires an unusual degree of either perseverance or carelessness, or perhaps both. Surveys cannot have become infrequent simply because they have gone out-of style, since any survey that follows current trends in the secondary

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[19] Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture,* 4th ed. (Harmondsworth, 1986), p. 11 (preface to the first edition, dated 1963).

[20] For his date of completion (1937), see Ostrogorsky, n. 8 above. (By contrast, I finished writing my history in 1993 at the ripe age of 44).

literature will be fashionable almost by definition[21]. Kazhdan's remark that political history has become unfashionable explains the rarity of political histories of all kinds, including monographs, but not the rarity of all surveys, which after all could be surveys of social history.

Perhaps paradoxically, one of the main reasons for the underdevelopment of Byzantine social history is probably current boredom with political history. Social history cannot exist in isolation; social historians have only been able to act as if it did in fields where the political history has already been well established. Even if the idea that the seventh-century invasions transformed Byzantine society has been pushed too far, it at least recognizes that political events can have social consequences. That recognition should be enough to show that whatever we say about Byzantine society needs to be qualified by considerations of time and place. And this we often are ill prepared to do.

Looking over the secondary literature of the whole Byzantine period shows how uneven the coverage is, and how many important and interesting subjects await treatment. Too many scholars seem to share the attitude of a questionnaire circulated in 1977 by the then Director of Dumbarton Oaks, which asked Byzantinists to rank which subjects were most "promising and productive", without distinguishing the two. The unquestioned assumption was that the subjects that have been studied most in the past are automatically the most promising for the future. But even in a relatively underdeveloped field like Byzantium, the reverse is more likely to be true: the most promising subjects are those that so far have been studied least. On the other hand, as a prediction of what will be done, a repetition of what has already been done is always a good guess.

Thus, though we have no book on the reign of Leo VI (886-912), five books on the reign of Julian (361-63) appeared between 1976 and 1986 to replace an earlier book that was already one of the best studies of a Byzantine ruler[22]. Both reigns have fairly abundant sources, including many writings by

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[21] E.g., Judith Herrin's *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton, 1987), and Averil Cameron's *The Later Roman Empire, A.D. 284-430* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), and *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, A.D. 395-600* (London, 1993).

[22] The recent books are Robert Browning, *The Emperor Julian* (Berkeley, 1976), Constance Head, *The Emperor Julian* (Boston, 1976), G. W. Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), Polymnia Athanassiadi-Fowden, *Julian and Hellenism* (Oxford, 1981), and Edgar Pack, *Städte und Steuern in der Politik Julians* (Brussels, 1986); the earlier book was J. Bidez, *La vie de l'empereur*

the emperors themselves, but the abundance is greater for the much longer reign of Leo. Even if Leo the Wise may not be quite as intriguing a figure as Julian the Apostate - this largely depends on how much one dislikes Christianity - Leo surely had the more attractive personality. The effects of Julian's reign were mostly ephemeral, while Leo's reign had lasting influence on Byzantine law and encyclopedism, on the history of the church and army, and on court ceremonial. A major study of the life, times, and legend of Leo the Wise might even find more readers than a seventh book on Julian. But at the stage when subjects are chosen (and funded), past interest spurs present interest, and past neglect breeds future neglect.

While this is a problem for the Byzantine field as a whole – none of which is truly fashionable – several phases are especially underworked. Comprehensive surveys are few nowadays, for reasons already mentioned here, but nothing else can quite duplicate their functions, because studies of aspects of history almost inevitably omit context. These studies may still be fully valid, as long as the context has already been established, but that presupposes either an earlier survey that the author can draw upon, or the author's willingness to establish the background for his chosen subject. Some works on Byzantium do display such patience, like Jean-Claude Cheynet's study of political power from 963 to 1210 or Alan Harvey's study of economic expansion from 900 to 1200[23]. But even these books are of limited use for different aspects of their periods than the ones they treat.

As I have already observed, most scholars who write specialized articles or monographs avoid subjects that are difficult or boring or not thoroughly covered before. We have so many studies of the causes of Iconoclasm that Peter Brown has observed that "the Iconoclast controversy is in the grip of a crisis of over-explanation"[24]. Yet we have no detailed survey, in a monograph or a larger book, of the reign of Leo III (717-741), who introduced Iconoclasm[25]. Cyril Mango has noted that most of the sources for

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Julien (Paris, 1930). [Soon after I wrote this paper, the first book on Leo VI appeared: Shaun Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI (886-912): Politics and People* (Leiden, 1997); see my review in *Speculum* 76 (2001), 236-38.]

[23] J.-C. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)* (Paris, 1990); Alan Harvey, *Economic Expansion in the Byzantine Empire, 900-1200* (Cambridge, 1989).

[24] Peter Brown, "A Dark-Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy", *English Historical Review* 88 (1973), p. 3.

[25] Karl Schenk, *Kaiser Leon III: Ein Beitrag des Bilderstreits* I (Halle, 1880), which stops with the year 720, hardly qualifies as a survey of the reign.

Iconoclasm still "need to be properly edited and analysed in detail", and has suggested that this "task ought to take precedence over the formulation of any further interpretations of Iconoclasm"[26]. But the warnings of Brown and Mango have generally gone unheeded[27].

If we consider the number of satisfactory surveys of periods, including both studies of individual emperors' reigns and works of wider scope, we find gaps that cover about half of Byzantine history. For the first three centuries we have two monumental works: that of Ernest Stein, with comprehensive political history and some social and economic history up to 565, and that of A. H. M. Jones, with comprehensive social and economic history and some political history up to 602[28]. Their coverage is not uniform, and they are about fifty and thirty years old respectively, but more specialized studies supplement them for much of the time they cover[29]. For the last two centuries, from 1261, we have nearly comparable coverage in the recently revised work of Donald Nicol, plus some more specialized studies[30]. For the 650-odd years in between, we are much less well served. Even in the rare cases when good specialized studies exist, they usually provide insufficient background to show their period's significance[31].

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[26] Cyril Mango, "Historical Introduction", in Anthony Bryer and Judith Herrin, eds., *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham, 1977), p. 6 n. 12.

[27] For an early example of the continuing literature, see John Haldon, "Some Remarks on the Background to the Iconoclast Controversy", *Byzantinoslavica* 38 (1977), pp. 161-84. [Now Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era* (Cambridge, 2011), summarized in Leslie Brubaker, *Inventing Byzantine Iconoclasm* (London, 2012), have asserted that the sources deceitfully "invented" Iconoclasm, though they provide no credible motive for such deceit; see my review of Brubaker's summary in *The Historian* 75 (2013), pp. 880-81.]

[28] Ernest Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1949-59); A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1964).

[29] For a full bibliography, see now the handbook of Alexander Demandt, *Die Spätantike: Römische Geschichte von Diocletian bis Justinian* (Munich, 1989).

[30] D.M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261-1453*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1993).

[31] I leave out of account Romilly Jenkins, *Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries, A.D. 610-1071* (London, 1966) and Mark Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025* (London, 1996), which are for most purposes inferior to Ostrogorsky's general history; cf. my review of Whittow in *International History Review* 19 (1997), pp. 889-91.

Although two authors have written comprehensive works on the seventh century, few of us are satisfied with the five volumes of Andreas Stratos, an amateur in both the good and the bad sense of the word, and many of us think John Haldon's book is warped by a dogmatic (if somewhat heretical) Marxism[32]. But after 711 we miss them, because there is nothing comparable for most of the eighth century. Often we are forced to use the two studies of Iconoclasm by Stephen Gero as if they were general surveys, which they were never meant to be[33]. Then we have four studies variously covering the years from 780 to 867, the old survey of J. B. Bury and newer books by Paul Speck, Pavlos Niavis, and myself[34]. With 867, even though the Byzantine sources are improving and the empire was expanding, the number of recent surveys becomes negligible, and even older ones become scarce.

Hardly a single book surveying any part of the period between 867 and 1081 can be recommended without reservation. Perhaps the best is Sir Steven Runciman's study of Romanus I (920-44), with defects that stem chiefly from its being almost seventy years old[35]. It has aged better than the four antiquated volumes of Gustave Schlumberger on the years from 963 to 1057, the most recent revision of which is just six years older than Runciman's book[36]. Michael Angold's history of the years from 1025 to 1204 is a creditable start, but too compressed to provide the detail that another

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[32] A. N. Stratos, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century* (Amsterdam, 1968-80); John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge, 1990); cf. my review of Haldon in *American Historical Review* 97 (1992), pp. 829-30.

[33] Stephen Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm During the Reign of Leo III, with Particular Attention to the Oriental Sources* (Louvain, 1973), and *Byzantine Iconoclasm During the Reign of Constantine V, with Particular Attention to the Oriental Sources* (Louvain, 1977).

[34] J.B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire from the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil I (A.D. 802-867)* (London, 1912); Paul Speck, *Kaiser Konstantin VI,* 2 vols. (Munich, 1978); Pavlos Niavis, *The Reign of the Byzantine Emperor Nicephorus I* (Athens, 1987); Warren Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival, 780-842* (Stanford, 1988).

[35] Steven Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and His Reign* (Cambridge, 1929).

[36] Gustave Schlumberger, *Un empereur byzantin au dixième siècle: Nicéphore Phocas,* new ed. (Paris, 1923), and *L'épopée byzantine à la fin du dixième siècle,* 3 vols. (Paris, 1896-1905).

specialist writing on the period would need[37]. Arnold Toynbee's work on Constantine VII (913-59) is not a history, and shows a lack of system and of focus reminiscent of the works ascribed to Constantine himself[38]. I omit a few not very satisfactory minor studies, but not many[39].

For the period from 1081 to 1204 matters improve. The old but precociously rigorous volumes of Ferdinand Chalandon cover the years from 1081 to 1180, and provided a solid basis for the recent work of Paul Magdalino, which has some of the elements of a survey[40]. From 1080 to 1204 we have the history of Charles Brand, supplemented at the end by two recent studies of the Fourth Crusade[41]. Then we lack a general survey of the chaotic but important events from 1204 to 1261; though we do have some competent partial accounts, ideally we should have a connected history of all the successor states, whose fates were closely intertwined[42]. And so we reach 1261, and Donald Nicol's survey, already mentioned.

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[37] Michael Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204: A Political History* (London, 1984).

[38] Arnold Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World* (Oxford, 1973). Cf. p. viii: "I have concentrated on aspects of Constantine's world in which Constantine himself evidently took a special interest, and here I have gone the most into detail in discussing interests of Constantine's that happen also to be mine...".

[39] Three studies of this period have appeared since I completed my own book. V. Vlyssidou, *Politique étrangère et réactions intérieures sous le règne de Basile Ier,* (Athens, 1991; in Greek, with French summary) is not a real survey and presents a schematic and distorted picture of the politics of the time. T. Kolias. *Nikephoros II. Phokas (963-969): Der Feldherr und Kaiser und seine Reformtätigkeit* (Athens, 1993; in Greek, with German summary) has its merits but is a study of Nicephorus's military policies rather than a survey. I. Rochow, *Kaiser Konstantin V. (741-775): Materialen zu seinem Leben und Nachleben* (Frankfurt, 1994), is a survey but concentrates on compiling bibliographical references rather than on illuminating its subject.

[40] Ferdinand Chalandon, *Les Comnènes: Études sur l'empire Byzantin au XIe et au XIIe siècles,* 2 vols. (Paris, 1900-1912); Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180* (Cambridge, 1993).

[41] Charles Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West, 1180-1204* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968); Donald Queller, *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople* (Philadelphia, 1977); John Godfrey, *1204: The Unholy Crusade* (Oxford, 1980).

[42] On Nicaea, Alice Gardner, *The Lascarids of Nicaea: The Story of an Empire in Exile* (London, 1912), is now supplemented by Michael Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile: Government and Society Under the Lascarids of Nicaea (1204-1261)* (Oxford, 1974). On Epirus, D. M. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros,* (Oxford, 1957), is supplemented by the introduction to the same author's *The*

One can cite various reasons for this mottled pattern of interest and neglect, and pure chance has surely been a factor[43]. In general, Late Antiquity up to the death of Justinian in 565 has been the most popular period, no doubt because Classicists have found it the most familiar. But even this cannot explain the relative neglect of the middle of that period, the century or so from about 410 to 518. We have every reason to believe that this was a time when the Eastern Roman Empire, which had seemed to be going the way of the Western, made an impressive economic and military recovery. Progress made then meant that in the following years Justinian had the money and power to fulfill many of his boundless ambitions. Although the fifth-century literary sources are somewhat meager, the archeological sources are ample, especially in Syria and Palestine. A thorough study of the fifth century could show precisely when the recovery began, and why the fourth and sixth centuries, which we know much better, were so different from each other.

One reason for the neglect of the fifth century is that a full study of it would need to include treatment in depth of both the army and the economy. Like Byzantine social history, both Byzantine economic and military history remain backward. The two subjects are related, because the large and costly Byzantine army had pervasive effects on the Byzantine economy, and vice versa; slowness to realize this fact, and the difficulty of mastering the two fields together, has contributed to the neglect of both. One who has seriously tackled both of them is Michael Hendy, whose massive collection of interlocking studies on the monetary economy almost amounts to a survey[44].

Despotate of Epiros, 1267-1479: A Contribution to the History of Greece in the Middle Ages (Cambridge, 1984). On Trebizond, William Miller, *Trebizond: The Last Greek Empire* (New York, 1926), can be supplemented to some extent by S. P. Karpov, *L'impero di Trebisonda, Venezia, Genova, e Roma, 1204-1461* (Rome, 1986).

[43] As a contributor to one of the worst cases of apparent scholarly redundancy, I may be able to shed a little light. I decided to write on the years from 780 to 842 because I thought Bury's survey of the years from 802 to 867 had failed to explain (or even to notice) the empire's cultural, economic, and political advances during the time. I began my research before the appearance of Speck's volumes on the years from 780 to 802, which in any case did not address the problem that interested me; Niavis's study of the years from 802 to 811 appeared only after my own book had gone to press. Although the overlapping of content among the books is actually rather modest, a wider distribution of scholarly effort would admittedly have been better.

[44] Michael Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy* (Cambridge, 1985). [My review, "Numismatics and the Ripening of Byzantine Studies", which

Published ten years ago, it has won general respect and has often been cited, but its conclusions have been less readily understood and adopted. Although part of the trouble is doubtless its bulk and intimidating style, a more serious obstacle is that it tells Byzantinists things that they are unprepared and unwilling to hear.

Hendy's economic evidence refutes several popular historical theories. He has argued, for example, that the middle Byzantine government was generally successful in keeping Anatolian magnates from buying out smallholders, that the Byzantines never really recovered any part of the Anatolian plateau from the Seljuk Turks, and that the economic scale of Italian trade within the empire was modest up to the end of the twelfth century[45]. He has also shown that a financial crisis in the seventh century would have left no time for the gradual introduction of land grants to soldiers, or of any other system of paying the army[46]. While Hendy's findings have seldom been challenged directly, some continue to assume anything they please about the Byzantine economy, regardless of logic or evidence[47].

Such an attitude particularly affects military history. For years historians have postulated the recruitment of new soldiers, or blamed the empire for failing to recruit new soldiers, with a blissful disregard for the costs. They have also praised the Byzantines for their conquests and blamed them for their losses without considering the numbers of soldiers on each side. The assumption has been that we cannot know anything useful about the costs or numbers. Yet in writing my general history I found so much neglected evidence for the size and cost of the army that finally I wrote a separate monograph, *Byzantium and Its Army,* on the army up to 1081[48]. And this is only a preliminary sketch. A recent book by Mark Bartusis has covered the army after 1261 more completely, but a gap remains between our two

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would have appeared in the *Rivista di Bizantinistica* if that journal had not ceased publication, now appears as Study 2 in this book.]

[45] Michael Hendy, *Studies,* pp. 100-108 and 131-38 (on the Anatolian magnates), 109-31 (on the failure to recover the plateau), and 590-602 (on Italian trade).

[46] Hendy, *Studies,* pp. 619-662.

[47] E.g., John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century,* pp. 244-51, who as a Marxist cannot accept that the empire benefited from essentially privatizing its land, has suggested that soldiers received no land but were directly supplied by the state. He fails to see that the state would only have aggravated its problems by shifting from payments in coin to payments in kind, because it would simply have incurred the extra costs of transporting supplies all over the empire.

[48] See n. 15 above.

studies[49]. Much remains to be written to explain how the economy and army worked, and, most of all, how each affected Byzantine society.

To turn from periods and topics to places, the various volumes of the *Tabula Imperii Byzantini* have gradually been showing us how different the parts of the empire were from each other[50]. But the volumes of the *Tabula* are primarily works of reference, for looking up individual sites; plenty of room remains for comprehensive regional studies, especially if they can combine geography with written sources and archeology. So far we have a few good studies of different Byzantine cities and of the islands, with some other works more limited in time span[51]. A book on Constantinople is on the way from Cyril Mango, and should represent a major advance in our knowledge of the best attested part of the empire.

Yet our evidence is adequate to allow a good many more regional studies. For the present, perhaps too little basic work has been done to permit satisfactory studies of all of Byzantine Anatolia or all of Byzantine Greece. But in view of the abundance of the sources it seems surprising that we still have no proper study of Mount Athos in the Byzantine period. The place is of obvious importance in itself, with a wealth of published documents and preserved monuments and objects, not to mention a living tradition

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[49] Mark Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army: Arms and Society, 1204-1453* (Philadelphia, 1992). [See now Michael J. Decker, *The Byzantine Art of War* (Yardley, PA, 2013), a creditable popularization, and my review in *War In History* 22 (2015), pp. 111-12.]

[50] Those published to date, all in Vienna, are: vol. I, J. Koder and F. Hild, *Hellas und Thessalien* (1976); vol. II, F. Hild and M. Restle, *Kappadokien (Kappadokia, Charsianon, Sebasteia und Lycandos)* (1981); vol. III, P. Soustal, *Nikopolis und Kephallenia* (1981); vol. IV, K. Belke, *Galatien und Lykaonien* (1984); vol. V, F. Hild and H. Hellenkemper, *Kilikien und Isaurien* (1990); vol. VI, P. Soustal, *Thrakien (Thrake, Rodope, und Haimimontos)* (1991); vol. VII, K. Belke and N. Mersich, *Phrygien und Pisidien* (1990). [Now also add vol. VIII, H. Hellenkemper and F. Hild, *Lykien und Pamphylien* (2004); vol. IX, K. Belke, *Paphlagonien und Honōrias* (1996); vol. X, J. Koder, *Aigaion Pelagos (die nördliche Ägäis)* (1998); vol. XII, A. Külzer, *Ostthrakien (Eurōpē)* (2008).]

[51] E.g., Clive Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis* (Cambridge, 1976), and *Ephesus After Antiquity: A Late Antique, Byzantine and Turkish City* (Cambridge, 1979), and Émile Janssens, *Trébizonde en Colchide* (Brussels, 1969); Elisabeth Malamut, *Les îles de l'empire byzantin, VIIIe-XIIe siècles,* 2 vols. (Paris, 1988), and D. Tsougarakis, *Byzantine Crete from the Fifth Century to the Venetian Conquest* (Athens, 1988).

continuous with Byzantium[52]. Other regions with archeological and literary sources that would allow them to be studied in depth - if not quite in such depth as Athos - are Cappadocia, Bithynia, Phrygia, and the Pontus[53]. Are these regions really less promising subjects than individual sites and monuments are?

In trying to give minimal attention to Byzantine art in my book, I was struck by the scarcity of general books on the subject. Aside from Cyril Mango's excellent survey of Byzantine architecture, nothing recent and comprehensive was available for most of Byzantine art, and the authors of most of the recent monographs made so few generalizations that little of general interest could be gathered from them[54]. Lyn Rodley's intelligent introduction to Byzantine art and architecture appeared after I finished writing; even though she writes primarily for students rather than scholars, art historians need to pay more attention to the sorts of general issues she raises, however briefly, at the ends of her chapters[55]. Attempts to relate developments in art to other developments in social and cultural history have been more frequent, but mostly sporadic and superficial[56]. Before Byzantine art can be integrated into Byzantine history, we need a grasp of what the general developments in art were.

The history of culture brings us to literature. As Kazhdan has noted, no one has yet written even a partial history of Byzantine literature as literature[57]. Fortunately he and Lee Sherry have begun to write such a history

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[52] E. Amand de Mendieta, *Mount Athos: The Garden of the Panaghia* (Berlin, 1972), is mostly on the post-Byzantine period. I acknowledge that female scholars have a good excuse for not tackling the subject.

[53] On the Pontus, Anthony Bryer and David Winfield, *The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontos,* 2 vols. (Washington, 1985), is not meant to be a full regional study.

[54] Cyril Mango, *Byzantine Architecture* (New York, 1975), is the exception. The unmet need for such general observations shows in the enormous influence on secondary literature of the short introductions in Mango's sourcebook. *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs. 1972).

[55] Lyn Rodley, *Byzantine Art and Architecture: An Introduction* (Cambridge, 1994).

[56] An honorable exception is Anthony Cutler and John Nesbitt, *L'arte bizantina e il suo pubblico*, 2 vols. (Turin, 1986).

[57] Kazhdan, *Studies* (as in n. 2 above), p. ix. [Before his death, Kazhdan completed two volumes of his projected work: *A History of Byzantine Literature (650-850)* (Athens, 1999) and *A History of Byzantine Literature (850-1000)* (Athens, 2006).]

(they start only with the mid-seventh century, in accordance with Kazhdan's view that the Byzantine period began then); this book may well have a major impact. For the present, however, to say that a Byzantine text has literary merit is still a controversial statement, even among Byzantinists. Most of those who work on Byzantine texts study them for a purpose that is not literary, and seem scarcely aware that a literary approach is possible. The usual assumption is that all Byzantine texts are artificial, formulaic, affected, and vapid. Art historians are particularly prone to believe this, because it is particularly true of the few texts that describe art.

Trying to find literary value in texts that have none is not the way to rehabilitate Byzantine literature. Yet that is the tendency of a recent insistence on taking Byzantine formal rhetoric seriously. Some scholars contend that the Byzantines must have admired and believed their court oratory—though strangely the same scholars refuse to accept the Byzantine theologians' explicit statements disparaging rhetoric and emphasizing content[58]. Similarly ignored is St. Augustine, who thought himself more miserable than a beggar in the street "on a day when I was preparing to recite the praises of the emperor, in which I would tell many lies, and be praised by those who knew I lied"[59]. Presumably the modem approach would be to believe the orator sent by the people of Epirus to Valentinian I (364-75) to praise and thank their prefect; the emperor, unaware of modem scholarship, asked the speaker what the Epirotes really thought, and received the answer that the prefect was a murderous tyrant[60].

In some other genres, however, the Byzantines expressed themselves with more sincerity, and often with freshness and originality[61]. There are signs that Byzantine verse, and particularly verse romance, is now receiving a more sympathetic hearing[62]. But the recent interest in Byzantine saints' lives has led to their being treated more as anthropological treatises, which they certainly are not, than as literature, which many of them are. Byzantine historiography, a branch of literature to which many educated Byzantines devoted their best efforts, continues to be underrated. Among many books

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[58] See my remarks in "Imaginary Early Christianity" (as in n. 15 above) [Study 3 in this book], especially referring to Averil Cameron's *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Berkeley, 1992).

[59] Augustine, *Confessions,* VI.6.

[60] Ammianus Marcellinus, XXX.5.8-10.

[61] See now A. R. Littlewood, ed., *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art, and Music* (Oxford, 1995).

[62] See R. Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance* (Cambridge, 1989).

that need to be written, I have taken the Byzantine historians as my own next research project[63].

Let me add, in closing, one encouraging observation. A considerably larger share of the books and articles written on Byzantium today say something new and valuable than seems to be the case in most other fields. Even though many of the publications I encountered in researching my book were not directly useful for my purposes, something in most of them would be useful for some other purpose – I mean for a real scholarly purpose, not simply to list in a bibliography for the sake of completeness. This is the good side of the underdevelopment of Byzantine studies. In comparison with the thousandth study of Homer or Chaucer, all Byzantine research breaks new ground.

[63] [See now Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke, 2007) and *The Middle Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke, 2013); *The Later Byzantine Historians* is still in progress].

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LATE ANCIENT AND BYZANTINE HISTORY TODAY

Around 1970, when I entered graduate school, my chosen subject of late ancient and Byzantine history seemed to have a bright future. Though the field had traditionally been strongest in Britain, by then nearly all major American universities and even some smaller ones had Byzantine historians. Harvard's opulently endowed Center for Byzantine Studies at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C., had a half-dozen research professors and sponsored several archeological projects and many publications. The standard history, the revised German edition of George Ostrogorsky's *History of the Byzantine State*, appeared in English translation in 1969, and important books in English were published every year. Particularly notable were two massive British projects (each over 1500 pages): A. H. M. Jones's *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey* (1964) and a new Byzantine volume of the *Cambridge Medieval History* by a team of British, American, and other historians (1966-67).

At that time most scholars still thought of Byzantine history, like all of ancient history, as part of Classical studies. The Byzantine Empire, though it lasted through the Middle Ages, was after all just the Eastern Roman Empire under a modern name (the Byzantines always called themselves Romans), and its rulers spoke first Latin and then Greek. Most late ancient and Byzantine historians still admired Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, thought Byzantium represented a decline from the early empire in many respects, and mainly wrote political history based on literary sources. Such was Ostrogorsky's excellent *History*, originally published in 1940 as a volume of a Classical handbook.

Yet the field was developing. Jones's subject was how the later Roman Empire's society, economy, and institutions functioned, and his sources were more often saints' lives, orations, letters, papyri, or inscriptions than historical texts. The *Cambridge Medieval History* volume was divided into a part on "Byzantium and Its Neighbours", which gave more space to the empire's relations with other cultures than to its internal history, and a part on "Government, Church, and Civilization", which was thematic rather than chronological. Both works showed a growing tendency to go beyond political history and literary sources.

But around 1970 the boom in American higher education ended. At first Byzantium and Late Antiquity seemed to be keeping their share of the reduced job market, perhaps because they linked ancient, medieval, Muslim,

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and Slavic history, any of which a Byzantinist might teach. On the other hand, academic fashions were turning against Classical studies as traditionalist and elitist, and that could only be bad for the study of Byzantium.

Meanwhile, however, the fashionability of Late Antiquity, and with it the earlier part of Byzantine history, found a champion in the British historian Peter Brown, who applied the poststructuralism of Michel Foucault to Late Antiquity. According to Brown, people in Late Antiquity cared most about power, sexuality, and rhetoric, and not really (as previously believed) God, morality, and chariot racing. Brown attached far more importance than earlier historians to living holy men (not dead saints), whom he saw as combining the roles of politician, psychiatrist, and guru. Insofar as Brown referred to religion, it was something vaguely New Age that he called "the holy". His work won acclaim chiefly from historians outside the field, who found its depiction of Late Antiquity intriguing even if they rejected poststructuralism in their own scholarship. In 1977, Brown became a professor at Berkeley, where his popularity increased.

Also in 1977, Harvard made some major changes at Dumbarton Oaks, whose endowment was then about a twentieth of the university's billion-dollar total. According to well-informed reports, the Harvard administration wanted to invoke an escape clause in the original donors' will, which would allow Harvard to use the endowment as it saw fit and in particular to move the Byzantine Center to Cambridge. After partial disclosure of this plan attracted adverse publicity, the newly named director of Dumbarton Oaks, the Harvard medievalist Giles Constable, declared that there had never been such a plan. But he soon stopped using the name of the Center for Byzantine Studies, abolished its by now depleted faculty, and ended its archeological program. Constable, whose own specialty was French monasticism, advocated a comparative approach that would stress Byzantium's similarities to medieval Western Europe and Islam.

Soon afterward the academic popularity of Byzantine history began to wane, as measured by positions retained or created in American universities. Byzantinists departed without being replaced at Yale, Stanford, Columbia, UCLA, Indiana, North Carolina, Texas, and elsewhere. Eventually no major American university had a full-time, senior Byzantine historian training graduate students. Dumbarton Oaks sponsored some joint appointments combining research fellowships with assistant professorships at different universities, but only one of these resulted in a permanent appointment in Byzantine history (at Rutgers). Several of the most promising junior Byzantinists left academics. Late Antiquity did little better, except for a few students of Peter Brown (who moved to Princeton). Byzantine studies

suffered particularly from the signal sent by Harvard's treatment of Dumbarton Oaks. The new subsidized positions seem to have reinforced impressions of a sick institution and a failing field, particularly because Dumbarton Oaks avoided any commitments that cost much money or lasted more than a few years.

Efforts by some historians, especially desperate ones seeking jobs, to follow either the postmodernism of Brown or the comparative approach promoted by Constable had, at best, mixed success. Brown's combination of a sense for academic fashion with a selective use of the sources proved hard to imitate or to expand upon. Much of what Brown wrote would have been sharply criticized as unfounded or erroneous if published by anyone with less prestige. The trouble with the comparative approach was that most of Byzantium's supposed similarities to the West and Islam turned out to be superficial. The fact that Roman rule and Greek culture survived in Byzantium but not in Western or Muslim lands made Byzantine society profoundly different from both. In the end, the comparative approach dissociated Byzantium from ancient history without securing its place in medieval history.

Probably the most favorable development in American Byzantine studies at this time was the arrival of the productive and perceptive Russian Byzantinist Alexander Kazhdan, who in 1978 took a position at Dumbarton Oaks without faculty rank or administrative authority. Though the books he published in America were all co-authored (one with Constable), his collaborators served mainly to help him with his English. Finding comparisons of Byzantium with Antiquity dangerous because they tended to imply that Byzantium was decadent, Kazhdan avoided them by arguing that the Arab and Slavic invasions of the seventh century had essentially destroyed the continuity of the empire, making way for a new society and culture. Kazhdan had little interest in Peter Brown's work, or in comparisons of Byzantium to the West or Islam. His main interest was the large and largely unfinished business of learning about Byzantium itself.

Kazhdan's great monument is the three-volume *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (1991). While many scholars contributed to it, Kazhdan planned it in detail, wrote a large share of its articles, and edited, revised, or rewrote many of the others. The *Dictionary* reflects his vision and shows his strengths. Without paying much attention to problems of continuity or decline, it illustrates Byzantine cultural ingenuity and social resilience, and catalogues and explains the insights and discoveries of Kazhdan's lifetime of research on Byzantium. Without distorting the evidence, it makes Byzantium look interesting and Byzantine studies look vigorous, though the vigor was mostly

Kazhdan's. Kazhdan died suddenly in 1997, leaving unfinished a *History of Byzantine Literature* that is as illuminating a collection of information as the *Dictionary*, if almost as episodic. Though his ideas have been influential, they provide little overall framework for Byzantine history, and even suggest that none may be applicable.

Meanwhile publication of scholarship in late ancient and Byzantine history has continued, largely without reference to postmodernism, comparative approaches, or any overarching interpretive frameworks. Much of it, especially on the European continent, consists of editing, translating, and commenting on texts and creating research tools like catalogues and prosopographies. This specialized work is often well done, and seldom distorted by scholarly fashions. However, it seems always to be preparing for more general work that, if it ever comes, is liable to be overwhelmed by more tools and information than it can use. Therefore, for better or worse, a fairly small group of British, American, and German historians are chiefly responsible for the scholarship that shapes current conceptions of Byzantine history.

The largest part of it has been on Late Antiquity, the period from about 300 to 600 A.D. that may also be called early Byzantine. Some outstanding studies have been published, notably by Ramsay MacMullen and Roger Bagnall in America, Alan Cameron and John Matthews first in Britain and then in America, and Timothy Barnes in Canada. These and other historians have built upon the work of A. H. M. Jones (who died in 1970) to provide a detailed and rounded picture of late Roman cities, government, culture, religion, and society in general. Yet most of their work has more or less ignored private behavior and beliefs, while Brown and his disciples have more or less ignored everything else. The division has been unhealthy for both sides, because it permits Brown's views to stand as an unquestioned orthodoxy in their own sphere and prevents a full understanding of late ancient Christianity, which was more than just a matter of power or psychiatry.

The middle Byzantine period, from about 600 to about 1000, has developed another orthodoxy that often goes unchallenged, this time a Marxist one. Its main proponents are Paul Speck and Ralph-Johannes Lilie in Germany, John Haldon in Britain, and their students. It begins not with a misreading of the sources but with a radical distrust of them—as Speck once remarked to me, "They all lie!". At its best, this attitude leads to criticizing sources that are clearly tendentious. At its worst, it leads to dismissing sources simply because they fail to fit such ideological preconceptions as skepticism

about religious motives, minimization of the importance of individuals in history, or emphasis on the role of the state.

Haldon, in particular, argues that Byzantium survived the seventh-century invasions by increasing state control. Yet any coherent reading of the sources shows that the state, having lost the greater part of its productive land to the Arabs and Slavs, was forced to reduce its control, notably by giving its soldiers state land to replace most of their pay. Haldon can avoid this conclusion only by assuming that the army was much smaller than all the sources indicate. His work, like Peter Brown's, has won acceptance from some scholars who seem unaware of how much it depends on an ideology they do not share. For example, the British historian Mark Whittow has used Haldon's criticism of the sources for a large army to argue that the Byzantine state was small and disorganized, though Haldon's reason for disregarding the sources was to show that the state was large and powerful.

The next Byzantine period, from about 1000 to 1200, has attracted a good deal of interest recently. Traditionally historians had seen this as a period of inexorable decline leading to the empire's crushing defeats by the Seljuk Turks in 1071 and the Fourth Crusade in 1204. Kazhdan and others, notably Michael Angold and Paul Magdalino in Britain, have instead stressed the growing strength of the empire's economy and culture throughout the period. Yet, apparently out of reluctance to consider evidence of Byzantine weaknesses that imply at least political decline, they give no clear explanation of why this thriving state lost to the Turks and Crusaders.

During the final period of Byzantine history, up to the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the political (though not cultural) decadence of the empire became so obvious that no one feels able to deny it. Perhaps not by coincidence, the period is the subject of that rarity in Byzantine studies, a satisfactory comprehensive history, the British historian Donald Nicol's *The Last Centuries of Byzantium* (rev. ed., 1993). Of course, a number of historians have done important work on subjects not directly embroiled in the scholarly controversies mentioned here. Examples in America are Clive Foss's studies of Byzantine cities and forts, Mark Bartusis' work on the late Byzantine army, and John Nesbitt's catalogues of the Byzantine seals at Dumbarton Oaks.

Nevertheless, if one follows the reigning fashions, late ancient and Byzantine history looks something like this: a period of poststructuralist holy men from 300 to 600, a period of Marxist social forces from 600 to 1000, an economic and cultural golden age from 1000 cut short by inexplicable defeat in 1204, then a decline down to 1453. All this fits passably with Kazhdan's ideas of "discontinuity" in Byzantine history, and seems to justify his lack of

enthusiasm for any general narrative history of Byzantium. Yet even Kazhdan was bothered by the combination of some of these discordant elements, and a few others have tried to make a little more sense out of the whole.

The best alternative to Peter Brown's views is in the work of Cyril Mango, who moved in the opposite direction from Brown, from America (Dumbarton Oaks) to Britain (Oxford). The index of Mango's *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome* (1980) lacks entries for such subjects as "holy man", "oratory", "body", or "sexuality", which Brown considers vital but Mango finds of little significance in Byzantine civilization. Mango's Byzantines are much the same from Late Antiquity to 1453: conservative, religious, puritanical, and inward-looking. Unlike Kazhdan and many others, Mango sees no reason to deny that Byzantium declined. He may overemphasize the Byzantines' backwardness, because what he says of most Byzantines was equally true of most ancient Greeks and Romans, and most people in predominantly agricultural and illiterate societies everywhere. But it is worth noting that most Byzantines disapproved of sex, preferred dead saints to living holy men, and found formal oratory incomprehensible. They would have detested Michel Foucault, especially for his homosexual activities, which under Byzantine law were punishable by castration in the sixth century and execution in the eighth century.

Another leading generalist is the British Byzantinist Michael Hendy, whose lengthy *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy* (1985) has been more often praised than read and used. It makes a practically conclusive case that the empire's survival in the seventh century came about through a deliberate reduction of the role of government, though by premodern standards Byzantium continued to be an organized state. Hendy was the first to demonstrate, in an article in 1970, that the Byzantine economy was thriving in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and long before. But he realized that the state often failed to tap the strength of the economy, so that the state could go bankrupt while its subjects grew rich. Hendy's book, though long, was meant only as a preliminary study for a full history of the Byzantine economy, which remains to be written and is much needed.

In my own *History of the Byzantine State and Society* (1997), I tried to tie up some of the remaining loose ends. I relied on Mango and Hendy, and often on Kazhdan, but, as I have already suggested, no one could write a coherent general history while following all the main secondary literature. I discussed Byzantine weaknesses, even those that imply the dreaded phenomenon of decline, and tried to consider both social and political history without confusing the two. Thus I saw no contradiction in concluding that Byzantium was declining economically in the seventh century but was

rescued by competent administration, or that Byzantium was expanding economically in the eleventh and twelfth centuries but was wrecked by incompetent administration. Reviews of my book have been relatively few and not particularly favorable, though I was heartened by how few errors the reviewers found. The most common criticism was that I disagreed with the secondary literature, especially that written by the reviewers. The field seems still to be waiting for a postmodern, Marxist comparativist who believes in discontinuity but not decline.

What wider issues can the fate of Byzantine and late ancient history during the last thirty years illuminate? In the widest sense, it suggests that the academic job crisis in America has led many scholars to follow academic fashions that are irrelevant to their fields, to become apologists for their subjects to the point of distortion, and to concentrate on selected topics that sound interesting at the expense of a coherent larger picture. Somewhat more specifically to Byzantine studies, neglect of the Greek and Latin Classics and an unwillingness to take Christian beliefs seriously have become obstacles to understanding Western civilization, whether premodern or modern. What happened to Dumbarton Oaks, though even more specific to Byzantine studies, is a far from uncommon example of what happens when universities think of themselves as businesses managing resources, not communities dedicated to scholarship.

Are there any positive signs? At least in the study of Byzantium and Late Antiquity, academic fads do seem to have become somewhat less popular as they lead to intellectual dead ends. Harvard appears to have got little good out of gutting Dumbarton Oaks, now mostly deserted except for underemployed librarians and visiting European scholars. Recently the job market in late ancient and Byzantine studies has improved slightly, as some universities have found that Antiquity, the Middle Ages, Islam, and modern Eastern Europe are hard to study apart from Late Antiquity and Byzantium, which join them all together. Finally, the fragmentation of American higher education seems to have gone so far as to provoke a longing for more coherence, which in turn may attract more attention both to the Classics and Christianity and to Late Antiquity and Byzantium.

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BYZANTINE EXCEPTIONALISM AND SOME RECENT BOOKS ON BYZANTIUM

In 1066 the Normans invaded England and won a decisive victory. While they claimed that their actions were justified, they held the land essentially by right of conquest and displaced nearly everyone who had been ruling it. After a few years they secured the whole kingdom and profoundly reshaped the society and culture of the country, where their descendants still reign. Likewise, in 1203-4 the men of the Fourth Crusade invaded the Byzantine Empire and won a decisive victory. While they claimed that their actions were justified, they held the land essentially by right of conquest and displaced nearly everyone who had been ruling it. Yet they never secured most of the empire, lost practically all of it by 1261, and had scarcely any lasting impact on the society or culture of the Byzantine world.

Various reasons can be given for the success of the Norman Conquest, and historians can easily imagine how it might have failed. What is much harder to imagine is how the Crusaders' conquest of Byzantium could ultimately have succeeded, at least without far more accommodation of the Byzantines or massive Western European immigration. Though the Normans spoke a different language from the English, both groups were part of a Western European political, social, and cultural system that was also shared by the Crusaders of 1204. This system was, however, incompatible with the Byzantine political, social, and cultural system, which soon expelled the Crusaders as an alien body. Byzantium was not just another medieval European country, like England or France, but a world of its own.

The contrasts between Byzantium and the West are still a problem for authors of general books on Byzantium, including the recent batch of seven reviewed here. Most Byzantinists know how different Byzantium was, but many prefer not to emphasize the fact. Scholars like to be fashionable, and fashions are set by the majority who study the medieval and modern West, the source of concepts like feudalism and nationalism. While today we are all aware of non-Western cultures, we think of Byzantium as Western, certainly in comparison with China, pre- Columbian America, or sub-Saharan Africa. This is presumably why the *American Historical Review* lists books on Byzantium under "Europe: Ancient and Medieval", though most Byzantine territory was in Asia or Africa (and Constantinople straddled Europe and Asia). Byzantinists may reasonably fear that insisting their

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subject is not fully Western could leave it without a place in either Western or non-Western history.

The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire comes very close to treating Byzantium as just another medieval European country, even if such treatment results mainly from the opportunism of its publisher[1]. Of the book's twenty-seven parts, only eight (plus the introduction) were actually written for it. Three more parts are adapted from the final volume of *The Cambridge Ancient History* (2000) and sixteen more from the seven-volume *New Cambridge Medieval History* (1995-2005), which has short chapters on Byzantium in each period. (The old *Cambridge Medieval History* had a separate volume on Byzantium). The editor of the *Cambridge History*, Jonathan Shepard, explains that an editor at Cambridge University Press "encouraged me to take on remodeling materials already available" (xvii). While the press profits from selling libraries the same material twice, the benefits to scholarship are less clear.

In his introduction Shepard struggles to lend the book some coherence[2]. He explains its beginning with the year 500 by citing the fall of the Western Roman Empire, without seriously claiming that this had much impact on Byzantium. His reason for concluding with 1492 – thirty-nine years after Byzantium fell – is that "the world had been predicted to end" then, a pretext undermined by a contributor's admission that practically no contemporaries believed that (856). Most individual chapters begin and end at these and other dates borrowed from *The New Cambridge Medieval History* that make little sense for Byzantium: 700, 900, 1300, and 1415 (though by chance 1024 and 1198 come close to events important for Byzantine history, the death of Basil II in 1025 and the Fourth Crusade in 1204).

The contributors seldom mention how different Byzantium was from Western Europe[3]. The editor tries to avoid the issue by suggesting that "there

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[1] Jonathan Shepard, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire, c. 500-1492* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[2] He (defensibly) tolerates his collaborators' disagreements on such matters as whether the fall of the Western Empire was important to contemporaries (99, 198), whether Justinian considered his reconquests part of a grand design (107, 201-2), or whether late Byzantine Thessalonica was a major center for Italian trade (846, 857). Shepard also notes my criticism that *The New Cambridge Medieval History* pays "undue attention to 'Byzantium's foreign relations with little regard for its internal history'" which he acknowledges is "pertinent" to this volume (10 and n. 23).

[3] One (Paul Magdalino) does say, "there is clearly some sense in the standard view that [the Fourth Crusade] confirmed beyond doubt how incompatible the two cultures had always been" (627).

is something about Byzantium, whether as political structure or cultural atmosphere, that resists categorization or orderly review in the manner of say, imperial Rome" (77). Actually Byzantium belonged to a category very like that of imperial Rome, which it directly continued: its bureaucracy, army, economy, and culture were by premodern standards highly developed. Among the rare factual errors in the book, three seem significant: that the many precise figures for Byzantine army units in the sources "are no more than rough estimates" (267), that soldiers "did not receive substantial regular cash wages" (502, refuted on 268-270), and that the whole wealth of Constantinople "only amounted to 300,000 marks" in 1204 (491), when the Crusaders estimated their plunder at 800,000 marks. All three mistakes make Byzantium look less developed (and more like Western Europe) than it really was.

In one of the few new chapters in the book, on the middle Byzantine economy, Mark Whittow refreshingly criticizes Marxist historians of both Byzantium and the West who assume that peasants worked harder for a landlord or the state than they did for themselves. The argument is that under a "feudal" or a "tributary" "mode of production" peasants produced more in order to pay their rent or taxes; but the idea that peasants work best under compulsion should finally have been disproved by the agricultural boom that followed the dismantling of the centrally planned economies of twentieth-century Russia and China. The *Cambridge History* has some other merits, including serviceable maps and illustrations, a capacious bibliography, and a long index. Yet it is far from being the authoritative history it could have been if intelligently planned from scratch.

Although somewhat shorter than the *Cambridge History*, *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* has even more contributors (seventy-four to twenty-four), parts (eighty-eight to twenty-seven), and editors (three to one).[4] The editors, Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon, and Robin Cormack, observe in their rather schizophrenic introduction that "Byzantine studies ... is a convenient term that comprises a vast range of sub-fields which often have little direct contact one to another – indeed, the contents of this volume illustrate this very clearly" (9). That they do. The introduction fitfully castigates most Byzantinists for not "challenging the theoretical assumptions underlying and informing their research" and insufficient use of a "comparative" approach (9-10, 15-17). Since most of the authors praised for such an approach are Marxists and the only Byzantinist consistently praised

[4] Elizabeth Jeffreys with John Haldon and Robin Cormack, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

is John Haldon, he is presumably writing here. The assumption is that Byzantium and other societies had many similarities that have been overlooked; but if so, most seem still to be overlooked in the *Oxford Handbook*.

The parts of the *Oxford Handbook*, each of about eleven pages including bibliographies, make a very mixed bag. The four parts of the "Political-Historical Survey" are too elementary for anyone who could profit much from the rest of the book. Some parts overlap (e.g., "Clergy, Monks, and Laity" and "Monasticism and Monasteries", "Art and Iconoclasm" and "Icons"). The three parts on "Documents" ("Imperial Chrysobulls", "Athos", and "Venetian Crete") omit many documents (those from non-Athonite monasteries, *taktika*, cadasters). The part on "Sigillography" fails to list all the catalogues of Byzantine seals, and that on "The Economy" fails to mention the three-volume *Economic History of Byzantium* (2002). "Chronology and Dating" treats its material as a joke, while "Art and the Periphery" argues persuasively that its subject is misconceived. In "Revenues and Expenditures" Haldon and Wolfram Brandes note that state revenue fell by up to three-quarters during the seventh century, without explaining how the state could still field armies against the Arabs. They ignore the only plausible explanation: that instead of pay the soldiers received grants from state lands (enormous in the sixth century, later almost gone), apparently because Marxists cannot accept that "privatization" saved the empire[5].

Some parts of the *Oxford Handbook* are well done, like "Lexicography and Electronic Textual Resources", "Epigraphy", "Communications: Roads and Bridges", and "Population, Demography, and Disease". Several others, like "Towns and Cities" and "Byzantine Theology", do as well as could be expected with big subjects and inadequate space. The book would surely have been more useful if the editors had organized it more carefully and assigned parts of varying lengths. In fact, they would have done better to prepare an updated edition of the three-volume *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (1991), a much more useful work. Unlike the *Oxford Handbook*, the *Oxford Dictionary* has an overall point of view, that of its editor Alexander Kazhdan, an ex-Marxist who emphasizes Byzantine uniqueness.

One might expect *A Social History of Byzantium* to have a clear viewpoint, since its editor, Haldon again, berates others for lacking one[6]. Yet he admits in his preface: "In the end, I have to confess that I have not succeeded in doing all the things I originally hoped", and "I believe that we

[5] On this question, see the books and reviews cited in notes 16 and 17 below.

[6] John Haldon, ed., *A Social History of Byzantium* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

are not yet in a position to write a single-authored social history of the Byzantine world – and whether anyone can ever hope to achieve such an aim satisfactorily may be doubted" (ix-x). This remarkable statement implies that a satisfactory Byzantine social history may be theoretically impossible, no matter how much the subject is studied. Others will suspect the real problem is that Haldon cannot make the sources fit his theories. In a chapter entitled "Towards a Social History of Byzantium" he declares that, when "tributary rulers [i.e., the state] and elites [i.e., landlords] compete directly for control over the means of production", all that changes "is the identity of those with the power to coerce. It is *the political structures and relationships through which surplus wealth is redistributed* which change" (26). These italics (in the original) seem intended to shout down the abundant evidence that independent peasants produced the economic expansion of middle Byzantine times.

The ten contributors to the *Social History* often show (and sometimes admit) a failure to match evidence with theory. Liz James insists, "Gender is so implicit, so ever-present, in the discussion of how Byzantine society is organized – as implicit as class – that it should appear as a matter of course in all other contributions to this book" (46). Yet no other chapter pays much attention to gender, and James's argument is undermined by the utter indifference of her heroine Irene (empress from 780 to 802) to any woman but herself. Haldon practically concedes that the Byzantine "ruling class" was so open to outsiders as not to be a class at all: "Different, competing factional groups, which changed their composition as their perceived interests and identities shifted, dominated the imperial court, and thus while a power élite in a generic sense maintained a monopoly on influence at court and over imperial policy, yet its composition was constantly changing" (172). Peter Sarris rightly protests: "If the social history of Byzantium is to be written at all, it must be written on the basis of the primacy of practical reason and a pragmatic approach to the evidence" rather than "a methodological Cloud-cuckoo-land" (94). This seems to mean abandoning the theoretical and "comparative" approaches sporadically used in the *Social History*.

A coherent overall view of Byzantium should be easier to attain in single-authored books than in collaborative volumes, and the title of Judith Herrin's *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire* suggests a study of the uniqueness of Byzantine civilization.[7] The book is in fact a popularization, professedly written "to engage the interest of construction

[7] Judith Herrin, *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2007).

workers" and others who know hardly anything about Byzantium (xiii). Herrin follows current fashions for popular history by combining over-interpreted anecdotes, breathless generalizations, a mixture of chronological and topical order, and major errors. For example, she writes that "Stilicho" controlled Italy after the fall of the Western Empire in 476 (13; Stilicho died in 408), the Lombards were named for Lombardy (68; Lombardy was named for them), and the Byzantines accepted Islam as divine "revelation" (324; they rejected it as diabolical and heretical)[8]. Her main thesis – that "[t]he systematic calumnies against Byzantium as an empire which continue to this day originated in the crusaders' attempt to justify their greed and pillage" in 1204 (332) – is also false. Byzantium was still widely admired in the West after 1204, and Renaissance Europeans lionized Byzantine emperors and scholars. Since Herrin must know this, her real target may be contemporary medievalists who neglect Byzantium.

Edward Luttwak's *Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* continues his *Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* (1976), taking the idiosyncratic but defensible position that Byzantium began in 395 and ended in 1204.[9] Luttwak's two main assumptions are certainly right: that the Byzantine army continued the Roman army, and that Byzantine strategy was overwhelmingly defensive. Yet otherwise he seems to assume that Byzantium resembled the West much more than it really did[10]. He attributes the Byzantines' defensiveness largely to their defeats by the Huns in the early fifth century (48); this overlooks the deep disapproval of warfare already expressed in the fourth century by St. Basil of Caesarea, who advised soldiers who killed an enemy in battle to abstain from communion for three years, a startling contrast to the Western approval of "just wars" codified by St. Augustine. Though Luttwak realizes that the Byzantine army was as well organized as the Roman army and better organized than Western medieval armies, he wrongly assumes that it was far smaller than the Roman army and similar in size to Western medieval armies.

Claiming that "[a]n acute shortage of combat-ready troops was indeed the perpetual condition of Byzantine warfare" (285), Luttwak

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[8] Note that the lists of errors in my review in *International History Review* 31 (2009): 99-101 and that of Florin Curta in *American Historical Review* 114 (2009): 813-14, though prepared independently, never overlap.

[9] Edward Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009).

[10] See my longer discussion of his book in *The Medieval Review* (10.06.22; https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/handle/2022/3631).

disregards evidence that the Byzantine army was large and effective until the eleventh century, when the emperors found it too large and expensive and debased the coins used to pay it. Although Luttwak assumes that the Byzantines' "ruinous defeat" by the Bulgarians in 811 put Constantinople at risk (182), the Bulgarians never seriously threatened the city, and the empire fought another major battle against them in 813 and defeated them in 816. Luttwak thinks that the empire had "no organized frontier defenses" in the East; but its eastern defenses were well organized and strong before it demobilized 50,000 frontier soldiers around 1053 by replacing their service with a tax. Only after the emperors had ruined their army in the late eleventh century by debasing its pay and dismissing its best men – a development entirely missed by Luttwak – did the Byzantines lack the troops to defend Anatolia against the Turks. Such misconceptions are particularly surprising in an author with a background in Roman military history, which explains so much about its Byzantine heirs.

The best of these books for a novice who wants a basic introduction to Byzantine history is Timothy Gregory's *A History of Byzantium.*[11] Competent if not exciting, it is obviously intended as an undergraduate textbook; it includes the boxes and timelines that students expect and avoids scholarly discussion that might confuse them. The text is clearly written, approximately in chronological order from 306 to 1453, with some treatment of what preceded and followed those dates. The second edition corrects most (but not all) of the mistakes in the first[12]. Gregory also reaches a sound conclusion: "Byzantium is the alternative West, showing how things might have turned out differently for Western Europe had circumstances been different, and providing valuable lessons of ways in which the European tradition itself can be seen and turned in different directions" (419).

Finally we come to Anthony Kaldellis's *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition*, which discusses Hellenism as a component of Byzantine identity along with Christianity and the Roman Empire.[13] These elements were originally somewhat discordant, because educated Greeks thought themselves

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[11] Timothy Gregory, *A History of Byzantium*, 2nd ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

[12] See my review of the first edition in *International History Review* 28 (2006): 374-75.

[13] Anthony Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

culturally superior to Romans and Christians, Christians disdained Greek and Roman paganism, and Romans conquered Greeks and persecuted Christians. Kaldellis asks a good question. Why can "Greeks" mean an ancient or modern people but scarcely ever the medieval people we call Byzantines? The Byzantines preferred to call themselves "Romans" or "Christians" and to use "Greeks" to mean pagans or people from the Greek peninsula (generally a backwater in Byzantine times). Kaldellis attacks important modern misconceptions, including nationalistic ideas of Greek continuity, romantic ideas of Byzantine claims to a "universal empire" (109), and "comparative" ideas of Byzantine similarities to Islam and Western Europe (111). His explanation for the failure of the "Latin Empire" established by the Fourth Crusade is to the point: "There was no uniformity in administration, taxation, economy, law, social differentiation, or religious worship. In some cases, feudal, Venetian, and Byzantine elements were stitched together in the hope that the golem might live" (347).

While Kaldellis is surely right that Byzantine emperors were no more "Greek" than American presidents are "English" (113), he is reluctant to compare Byzantium to the United States on the grounds that though Byzantium "was not ethnic in conception", the idea that "belonging does not depend on ethnicity" in America is "largely a fiction" (99-100; I agree about Byzantium, not about America). He demonstrates that educated Byzantines began to claim a Greek identity in the eleventh and twelfth centuries out of admiration for the Greek classics, but also that this "was in many ways a fantasy" (232). He shows that some thirteenth-century Byzantines claimed to be Greeks in reaction to the Fourth Crusade (since the Crusaders were obviously not Greeks, though they could claim to be Christians and "Romans"), but that most Byzantines found a Greek identity "carried with it too much baggage from a Christian point of view" (386). His summation of the limited but real importance of the Byzantines' Greek identity is felicitous: "Hellenism was not a fixed point, a star, so much as it was like an artfully arranged constellation: one could get bearings from it" (396). As an authoritative study of the Byzantines' Greek identity, the book significantly advances understanding of Byzantine exceptionalism.

Why are five of these seven books – a fair sample of those recently written on Byzantine history – so unsuccessful, when most of their hundred-odd authors are good scholars and several have done outstanding work elsewhere? The reasons extend well beyond the Byzantine field. Most popularizations have become less serious and accurate as their authors strive to keep their readers interested, and most scholarly works have become less accessible and wide-ranging as their authors assume that only specialists read

serious books. Although we can blame publishers to some extent, the average reader probably does have a shorter attention span and a poorer general education than at any time in the recent past. This problem is worse for writers on less familiar topics like Byzantium than for writers on current affairs, Nazi Germany, or the American Civil War.

Another general problem is publishers' growing enthusiasm for compilations by many authors, who can be paid little or nothing for reference books that libraries will buy at extortionary prices. Yet if fifty heads were better than one, the hellhound Cerberus would have been the perfect dog. Scholars seldom do their best work when given ten or even thirty pages to summarize earlier research on a topic chosen by someone else; and a book written by many authors in independent sections is unlikely to have a coherent point of view or to break new ground. Read from cover to cover only by an occasional reviewer, these books often sit in libraries unused. The relatively small cohort of Byzantinists is especially liable to be distracted from original work by writing and editing such collections, of which two more have just been published at still higher prices[14]. Contributors have been slow to see how little such collaboration benefits them or anyone else, since until recently it was less common, better done, and more prestigious. At last a few have begun to question the value of being one of dozens of authors, or even the editor, of an unoriginal mishmash that almost no one will read[15].

Another problem extending beyond Byzantine studies is a reluctance either to accept or to dispute Marxist interpretations. Admittedly, the temptation is strong to disregard those who disregard others and who never take their own advice to "challenge the theoretical assumptions underlying and informing their research". At least in the Byzantine field most scholars do ignore Marxist theories, as the introduction to the *Oxford Handbook* complains; but that introduction is also right that most Byzantinists avoid drawing any general conclusions about society or economics. Certainly a

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[14] Liz James, ed., *A Companion to Byzantium* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), listed at $199.95 [see now my review in *The Medieval Review* 11.03.03; http://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/tmr/article/view/17171/23289], and Paul Stephenson, ed., *The Byzantine World* (Routledge, 2010), listed at $250.00, appear to overlap significantly with the *Cambridge History* and the *Oxford Handbook*.

[15] See Josiah Ober, "Letter from the President: Too Much Companionship?" *American Philological Association Newsletter* 32 (2009): 1-3, announcing, "I no longer accept invitations to contribute to classical Companions", meaning "multiple-author reference works".

satisfactory social history of Byzantium could be written if it abandoned Marxist ideas of class and "modes of production"; but no one seems interested in writing it. The late Michael Hendy made an excellent start on an economic and administrative history of Byzantium in a long book showing, among other things, that the Marxist interpretation of the seventh-century crisis was financially impossible[16]. Yet Hendy's book has been respectfully ignored both by Haldon and by the thirty-four contributors to the aforementioned *Economic History of Byzantium*, another massive, inconclusive collaboration that similarly ignores Haldon's work[17]. Since refusing to discuss any significant interpretation creates an obstacle to scholarship, responding to Marxist scholars should be a normal part of scholarly debate[18].

One last problem, which Byzantine studies share with other endangered specialties, is desperation to win outside acceptance. Most American Byzantinists have given up trying to be accepted as classicists by classicists, who are fighting just to maintain their own field[19]. While a few Byzantinists are accepted as Marxists by other Marxists, and a few more try to attract attention by writing popularizations, many more hope a "comparative approach" will win them the favor of Western medievalists. Yet few Western medievalists welcome comparisons that, except for basic and obvious similarities, show how much Byzantium differed from the medieval West—especially when they show that Byzantium was more sophisticated than the medieval West. Byzantine exceptionalism ought to make Byzantium seem more interesting and important, not least for understanding how today's Russians and other Eastern Europeans differ from Americans and Western Europeans. Byzantinists, however, seem not to have made that point effectively.

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[16] Michael Hendy, *Studies on the Byzantine Monetary Economy*, c. 300-1450 (Cambridge University Press, 1985), especially 553-667.

[17] See John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1990); Angeliki Laiou, ed., *The Economic History of Byzantium*, 3 vols. (Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collections, 2002); and my reviews of both in *American Historical Review* 97 (1992): 829-830 and *American Historical Review* 109 (2004): 236-37.

[18] Cf. Wolfram Brandes's review of my *History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford University Press, 1997) and *Concise History of Byzantium* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 95 (2002): 716-725 and my reply in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 96 (2003): 802-4.

[19] See Kaldellis's mournful aside: "One day, when the classical bias in hiring abates, it will be possible for Hellenists to write fewer unread dissertations on Homer and more on buried gems like [Theodore] Prodromos" (*Hellenism*, 271 n. 127).

II. Problems in Byzantine Historiography

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THE DIPLOMATIC CAREER AND HISTORICAL WORK OF OLYMPIODORUS OF THEBES

Olympiodorus of Thebes was one of the more cosmopolitan figures in the Roman Empire of the late fourth and early fifth centuries. An Egyptian, and a convinced but discreet pagan, he knew Greek, Latin, and evidently Coptic. He studied philosophy, wrote history and poetry, and pursued a public career as a diplomat. His diplomatic service included an embassy to the Huns in 412, at least one more embassy to "barbarian tribes", and probably a mission in 424-5 from the Eastern Roman Empire to the Western Roman Empire. Although most of Olympiodorus' history is lost today, its fragments remain our chief source for the Western Roman Empire around the time Rome fell to the Visigoths in 410, and supply important evidence for the history of the Huns, the Nubians, and pagan intellectuals in the early fifth century[1].

A good deal of guesswork is needed to reconstruct the outlines of Olympiodorus' history and life from incomplete and tantalizing scraps of texts. His history is one of many books in Greek summarized in the *Bibliotheca* of the ninth-century Byzantine polymath Photius. Photius' summary indirectly shows that Olympiodorus was the almost exclusive source for the last few years of the unfinished *New History* of Zosimus, compiled around the year 500[2]. Further fragments from Olympiodorus survive in the fifth-century ecclesiastical histories of Sozomen and Philostorgius, and possibly in the sixth-century *Wars* of Procopius[3].

The many summaries of books in the *Bibliotheca*, an informal compilation that appears to be based largely on Photius' old reading notes,

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[1] All translations given here are my own.

[2] Zosimus 5.27.1 cites Olympiodorus by name, about a minor point on which Zosimus disagreed with him. On most other matters, Zosimus seems to have followed Olympiodorus. On Zosimus, see W. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 107-14.

[3] See R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicizing Historians of the Later Roman Empire* (Liverpool, 1981, i. 107-12. Like Blockley, I doubt that Procopius consulted Olympiodorus directly, though Procopius seems to have used a history by Eustathius of Epiphania that drew on Olympiodorus; see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 215-16.

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vary in length and quality[4]. Photius disliked Olympiodorus' work, which he considered poorly written, and his description of it cannot be considered one of his best efforts[5]. His summary, comprising some twenty pages in the most recent edition of the *Bibliotheca*, is severely abbreviated, to perhaps a fortieth of the original length of the history's twenty-two books, and is often correspondingly obscure[6]. Various scholars have consequently used Photius' summary and the other fragments to arrive at quite different assessments of Olympiodorus' history[7].

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Presumably drawing on Olympiodorus' own preface, Photius begins his summary by noting that the historian described himself as a native of Egyptian Thebes (modern Luxor), a professional poet, and a pagan by

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[4] See W. Treadgold, *The Nature of the Bibliotheca of Photius* (Washington, 1980). The most recent edition, with French translation, is by R. Henry, *Photius: Bibliotheque* (9 vols., Paris, 1959-91, including an index volume by J. Schamp; the description of Olympiodorus is in i. 166-87, but Henry retains the column and line numbers of the previous edition by I. Bekker, Photius, *Bibliotheca* (Berlin, 1824-5), 56b.6-63b.31.

[5] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 56b.12-29.

[6] F. Paschoud, "Le debut de l'ouvrage historique de Olympiodore", in *Studia in Honorem Iiro Kajanto*, ed. J. Aronen (Helsinki, 1985), pp. 186-8, calculates a ratio of about 1:40 by supposing that Olympiodorus' books were originally comparable in length to the short books of Ammianus. If instead they resembled the longer books of Zosimus, the ratio would be about 1:60; but that would appear to make Olympiodorus' history improbably long.

[7] The significant general discussions are W. Haedicke in *Paulys Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1939), xviii.1. cols. 201-7; E. A. Thompson, "Olympiodorus of Thebes", *Classical Quarterly*, xxxviii (1944), 43-52; J. Matthews, "Olympiodorus of Thebes and the History of the West (ad 407-25)", *Journal of Roman Studies*, lx (1970), 79-97; B. Baldwin, "Olympiodorus of Thebes", *L'Antiquité Classique*, xlix (1980), 212-31; Blockley, *Classicizing Historians*, i. 27-47 and 107-12 (discussion) and ii. 152-220 (text and translation of the fragments); A. Gillett, "The Date and Circumstances of Olympiodorus of Thebes", *Traditio*, xlviii (1993), 1-29; D. Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity* (London, 2002), pp. 73-81; and W. Liebeschuetz, "Pagan Historiography and the Decline of the Empire", in *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity*, ed. G. Marasco (Leiden, 2003), pp. 201-6. See also *[The] P[rosopography of the] L[ater] Roman] E[mpire]*: II, ed. J. R. Martindale (Cambridge, 1980), Olympiodorus 1.

religion[8]. His family evidently belonged to the curial class of Thebes (whose property was large enough to require them to serve on the *curia*, the city council), because, although not of senatorial rank, they were rich enough to give him a fine education in Greek in a region where ordinary people only spoke Coptic[9]. Because we first hear of Olympiodorus as an ambassador to the Huns in 412 and his history ends with 425, his birthdate has been placed in the years between 365 and 380. John Matthews prefers a date around 380 on the assumption that "his active life fell ... in his thirties and forties"[10]. Yet this is only a guess; we might as easily suppose his active life fell in his forties and fifties.

Olympiodorus counted among his friends the philosophers Hierocles of Alexandria and Leontius of Athens[11]. According to Photius, Hierocles addressed to Olympiodorus a treatise *On Providence and Fate*, which is now lost except for another of Photius' summaries. In its preface, Hierocles offered the work to Olympiodorus for his criticism, described him as having originally inspired it, and praised his passion for philosophy. Hierocles also mentioned Olympiodorus' distinguished service as an ambassador "to many of the greatest barbarian tribes", and attempted to console him for the death of his adopted son[12]. As for the second friend, Leontius, Olympiodorus himself said that, while visiting Athens in 416, he exerted himself successfully to have Leontius appointed to a professorship there[13]. Where did Olympiodorus meet these two men?

Hierocles taught at Alexandria and Leontius at Athens; neither city was a place where Olympiodorus seems likely to have resided for long. Hierocles wrote in his treatise that he had been taught by the philosopher Plutarchus at Athens, and Leontius, known as an Athenian and a philosopher, presumably learned philosophy at Athens as well[14]. So probably did

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[8] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 56b.12-14.

[9] Thompson, "Olympiodorus of Thebes", pp. 51-2; though Thompson overdraws his picture of Olympiodorus as a proto-Marxist, he is surely right that Olympiodorus was of less than senatorial status.

[10] Matthews, "Olympiodorus", p. 79; cf. Haedicke, *Paulys Realencyclopädie*, xviii.i. col. 201, and Blockley, *Classicizing Historians*, i. 27.

[11] See *PLRE* II, Hierocles 1 and Leontius 6.

[12] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 214, 171b.19-32.

[13] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 60b.6-10 = Olympiodorus fr. 28.1-4 Blockley.

[14] See Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 214, 173a.34-40 (Plutarchus as teacher of Hierocles), and Socrates 7.21 and John Malalas 14.4 Thurn = p. 353 Dindorf (Leontius as an Athenian philosopher). Besides, anyone who named his daughter

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Olympiodorus, because he had connections at Athens later, and his history gave a detailed description of the rituals in the baths by which students there were initiated into their studies[15]. Yet Olympiodorus never became a professional philosopher in the same sense as he was a professional poet; Hierocles' remarks imply merely that his friend had a basic education in philosophy and the interests of a gifted amateur. Therefore, Olympiodorus, Hierocles, and Leontius seem likely to have met at Athens as beginning students of philosophy, presumably when they were quite young. In the early 360s, Eunapius of Sardis completed his studies at Athens between the ages of 15 and 19, which seems to have been typical[16]. Although we have no specific evidence for Hierocles' age, his teacher Plutarchus, who was born at Athens around 350 and died there in the early 430s, can hardly have been one of the city's main teachers much before 385[17]. Hierocles was therefore born not much earlier than 370.

As for Leontius, when he died around 420 he had two grown sons and a somewhat younger daughter, Athenaïs, who in 421 converted to

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Athenaïs, as Leontius did, is likely to have been an Athenian. A. Cameron, "The Empress and the Poet: Paganism and Politics at the Court of Theodosius II", *Yale Classical Studies*, xxvii (1982), 273-5, suggests identifying Leontius of Athens with another Leontius who converted from paganism to Christianity at Alexandria. Yet the name Leontius was not unusual (there are 30 in *PLRE* II), and nothing links the Alexandrian Leontius with Athens or with any specific profession or date. (*PLRE* II, Leontius 14, dates him to the middle or late fifth century and distinguishes him from Leontius 6 of Athens, who died c.420). Moreover, the identification seems incompatible with Socrates 7.21.8, who says that Leontius of Athens' daughter Eudocia converted to Christianity from paganism just before her marriage in 421. (Socrates' description of Leontius as a rhetorician rather than a philosopher poses no problem, since Leontius had held a chair of rhetoric.)

[15] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 60b.6-30 = Olympiodorus fr. 28 Blockley. On the initiation ceremony, see J. W. H. Walden, *The Universities of Ancient Greece* (New York, 1909), pp. 301-7. Since this initiation was probably not attended by outsiders, Olympiodorus' description looks like a reminiscence about his student days.

[16] Eunapius, *Lives*, 10.1.2, 485 and 8.1-3, 493. For the dates, see R. Penella, *Greek Philosophers and Sophists in the Fourth Century AD: Studies in Eunapius of Sardis* (Leeds, 1990), pp. 1-4. On the ages of students at Athens, see also Walden, *Universities of Ancient Greece*, pp. 292-3, who concludes, "from fifteen to twenty may have been the usual age", though some students were older.

[17] See *PLRE* I, Plutarchus 5.

Christianity, took the name Eudocia, and married Emperor Theodosius II[18]. Leontius' son Valerius, apparently the eldest child, also converted to Christianity after his sister's marriage and held several high offices, the first being that of *Comes Rei Privatae*, treasurer of the emperor's private estates, in 425[19]. Since Valerius is unlikely to have received such a responsible post before the age of 30, he was presumably born by 395. His father, Leontius, was therefore born not much later than 370.

These considerations suggest that Leontius, Hierocles, and Olympiodorus were all born around 370 and studied at Athens around 385-390. A birthdate as late as 380 for Leontius seems too late to fit his son's age, while a birthdate as early as 360 for Hierocles seems too early for him to have studied under Plutarchus. While Olympiodorus might have been a bit younger or older than his two friends, what we know of the rest of his life is fully compatible with a birthdate around 370. He would then have gone on his embassy to the Huns at the age of about 42, and would have been about 55 at the concluding date of his history, when he apparently went on an important mission to Rome.

After studying philosophy at Athens, Olympiodorus doubtless set about writing the poetry that he later considered his main occupation. At first, he may have returned to his curial duties at Thebes, especially because, at the time, Upper Egypt had a notable community of poets writing in Greek[20]. Probably he also married. This is the most likely time for him to have adopted his son, who was perhaps an orphaned relative and seems to have lived in Thebes later, as only a native Theban would presumably have chosen to do. In 399 or 400, Olympiodorus appears to have acquired a remarkable parrot, which could sing, dance, call people by their names, and do other tricks, and

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[18] See John Malalas 14.3-5 Thurn = pp. 352-5 Dindorf, where Valerius is named first; cf. *Chronicon Paschale*, pp. 575-9 (evidently from the same source as Malalas, but misreporting Leontius' name as "Heraclitus"). Cf. *PLRE* II, Eudocia 2, Valerius 6, and Gessus 2.

[19] See *PLRE* II, Valerius 6. He was also *Comes Sacrarum Largitionum* in 427, consul in 432, and *Magister Officiorum* in 435, and is last heard of c.455. On all of these offices, see A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 412-38, 532-3, and 575-84.

[20] See A. Cameron, "Wandering Poets: A Literary Movement in Byzantine Egypt", *Historia*, xiv (1965), 470-509.

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parrots were probably easier to find in Upper Egypt than in Athens or Constantinople[21].

Yet, before long, Olympiodorus seems to have settled with his parrot (and probably his wife and son) in the capital, where a literary man could hope to attract attention at court. Evidently, Olympiodorus succeeded in finding favour in ruling circles some time before he was sent on his first known embassy in 412. By then, he must have gained the working knowledge of Latin that is apparent from his writing[22], as Latin was necessary for any important government appointment even in the Eastern Roman Empire, and could be more readily learned in Constantinople than in Athens or Egyptian Thebes.

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Although Olympiodorus might have had some old friends at Athens who helped him secure Leontius' appointment as professor, we should question some modern historians' assumption that he enjoyed enough personal influence there to determine a professorial appointment[23]. The support of an old alumnus, casual visitor, and amateur philosopher could scarcely have been decisive with the Athenians if Olympiodorus had not also been representing the emperor at Constantinople. He had already represented the emperor four years earlier in 412, when Photius' short and rather cryptic summary implies that he was the Eastern government's chief ambassador to the Huns.

As the description of the embassy in Photius' summary both follows and precedes events datable to 412, it presumably occurred in that year[24]. This is the first passage in the summary after the preface that refers to Olympiodorus himself. According to Photius,

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[21] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 62a.5-8 = Olympiodorus fr.35 Blockley, datable around 419, seems to be an obituary for the parrot, and mentions that the author had owned it for twenty years.

[22] On his knowledge of Latin, see Thompson, "Olympiodorus of Thebes", p. 48, Matthews, "Olympiodorus", pp. 85-7, and Blockley, *Classicizing Historians*, i. 37-8.

[23] Cf. Thompson, "Olympiodorus of Thebes", p. 43, Matthews, "Olympiodorus", p. 80, and Cameron, "Empress and the Poet", p. 274.

[24] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 58b.19-34 (death of the Visigothic chieftain Sarus in 412) and 59a.3-16 (proclamation of Sebastian, brother of the Gallic usurper Jovinus in 412) = Olympiodorus frs. 18 and 20 Blockley; cf. *PLRE* II, Sarus and Sebastianus 2.

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> [Olympiodorus] discourses about Donatus and about the Huns, and about the skill of their kings at archery, and about how the historian went on an embassy to them and to Donatus. He speaks melodramatically about his voyage across the sea and his peril, and about how Donatus, deceived by an oath, was lawlessly assassinated, and how Charaton, the first of [the Huns'] kings, was inflamed with anger at the murder, and how he was calmed and quieted again by means of gifts from the emperor. With these things the first decad of books of the history [ends][25].

The contention of Otto Maenchen-Helfen, followed by some others, that Olympiodorus was sent by the Western Roman court from Ravenna across the Adriatic Sea to the Hungarian plain appears improbable[26]. Every certain or likely indication of Olympiodorus' whereabouts puts him within the Eastern Roman Empire until 424, and he addressed his history to the Eastern emperor, Theodosius II (408-50), whom he evidently served[27]. Thus, his perilous voyage was presumably from Constantinople across the Black Sea, before he sailed up the Danube to the Huns' camp. Though many modern historians have identified the summary's otherwise unknown Donatus as one of the Huns' kings, the name is a Roman one, and the summary appears to distinguish him from the Huns; the most plausible interpretation is that Donatus was a Roman officer or official who had deserted to the Huns' king, Charaton[28].

Olympiodorus was sent both to the Huns and to Donatus, perhaps with instructions to persuade Donatus to return to imperial service in exchange for a sworn promise of immunity that Donatus accepted. Nonetheless, someone else on the embassy seems to have violated the oath and had Donatus killed, acting on orders of which Olympiodorus disapproved and perhaps had no advance knowledge. He then had to use the gifts sent with him by the emperor to calm Charaton's indignation at the treacherous murder of a man who had been living under royal protection. Charaton held the Romans responsible for the murder, and the summary implies that he was

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[25] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 58b.35-59a.2 = Olympiodorus fr. 19 Blockley.

[26] O. Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns: Studies in Their History and Culture* (Berkeley, 1973), pp. 73-4, tentatively followed by Blockley, *Classicizing Historians*, pp. 27 and 163, n. 17.

[27] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 56b.26-9.

[28] As suggested by Maenchen-Helfen, *World of the Huns*, p. 423, and in *PLRE* II, Donatus 2.

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right to do so. Olympiodorus' situation may well have resembled that of Maximinus, sent by Theodosius II's government in 449 as ambassador to the Huns, but kept unaware of the plot to assassinate their king Attila during the embassy. That plot was betrayed to Attila, embarrassing and endangering Maximinus and his deputy Priscus, who told the story in his history[29].

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After the embassy of 412, Olympiodorus must have returned to report to his superiors at Constantinople. As far as we know, he remained in the capital until 416. The next time Photius' summary preserves a reference by the historian to himself comes just before the visit to Athens during which he had Leontius made a professor. Because the summary interrupts its account of this visit in the middle with some brief references to events datable to 416, the visit evidently occurred during that year[30]. The summary prefaces its account of Olympiodorus' stay at Athens with a description of a strange story the historian was told. As this story follows events datable to 415, Olympiodorus seems also to have heard it in 416, and quite possibly at Athens[31].

Photius summarizes the circumstances and content of the story as follows:

> The historian says that he heard from Valerius, one of those of high rank, about silver statues endowed with the power of warding off barbarians. For in the days, he says, of the emperor Constantius, when Valerius was an administrator in Thrace, there was a report that a treasure had been found. Valerius, having come to the place, learned from the inhabitants that the place was sacred, and that statues had been dedicated there by a magic spell long ago. He then informed the emperor of these things, and received a letter allowing him to confiscate what he had reported. When the place had therefore been excavated, three statues made of solid silver were

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[29] See Priscus, frs. 11-15 Blockley; the best modern discussion is in E. A. Thompson, *The Huns* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 104-36, which is only slightly revised from his *History of Attila and the Huns* (Oxford, 1948), pp. 95-124.

[30] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 60b.31-61a.6 (with Vallia's agreement with Honorius freeing Galla Placidia in 416) = Olympiodorus frs. 29-30 Blockley; cf. *PLRE* II, Vallia.

[31] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 60a.20-2 (the proclamation of Vallia as king of the Visigoths in summer 415) = Olympiodorus fr. 26 Blockley.

> discovered prostrate, looking like barbarians, with both their hands tied behind their backs, dressed in the embroidered clothes of barbarians, with long hair on their heads, and turned in the direction of the north—that is, toward the territory of the barbarians. When these statues had been confiscated, right away, after a few days, first the tribe of the Goths overran all of Thrace, and a little later both [the tribe] of the Huns and that of the Sarmatians were to ravage both Illyricum and Thrace as well. For the [statues] of this magic spell were located between Thrace and Illyricum, and the number of the three statues appeared to be dedicated so as to oppose each barbarian tribe [i.e., the Goths, Huns, and Sarmatians][32].

As transmitted by Photius, this story of the protective statues is puzzling indeed. The emperor in question seems to have been Constantius II (337-61), the only emperor of that name who ever ruled Thrace. Constantius III cannot fit the circumstances, because he never ruled anywhere near Thrace and his short reign as junior emperor with Honorius in the West occurred in 421, five years after the time of the passage in Olympiodorus' history in which the story appeared. Constantius II is also indicated because the invasions described must belong to a time long before 416, when the Sarmatians were powerful and independent (as they no longer were in 416) and when posterity could fancy that Thrace and Illyricum had previously been inviolate (as everyone knew they had not been for many years before 416).

The Sarmatians and Goths did actually raid Thrace under Constantius II and his predecessors. Yet their incursions would have faded from memory after the Huns drove the Goths into Thrace and the Goths defeated the Romans in the battle of Adrianople in 378, beginning the catastrophic invasions to which the tale of the statues evidently refers. Matthews therefore rejects the reference to Constantius and dates the story to the reign of Valens, around 375[33]. However, no date can be identified after, during, or before the reign of Constantius II when a Gothic invasion of Thrace followed a long period of peace and closely preceded invasions of the Huns and Sarmatians. In fact, that the story is a pagan legend, based on fading memories of much earlier events, is evident from its chronological and geographical vagueness and inaccuracy, and its carefully elaborated magical elements. In all probability, no such statues ever existed.

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[32] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 60a.23-60b.5 (at 60b.5, add ἔθνους from MS. M) = Olympiodorus fr. 27 Blockley.

[33] Matthews, "Olympiodorus", p. 96 and n. 180.

As for the Valerius who told the tale to Olympiodorus and was allegedly some sort of governor before 361, he is chronologically suspicious but not quite impossible. A man who held a governorship in 361 at the age of 30 would have been 85 in 416. Yet this still seems an improbable story for someone to tell about himself. The storyteller was evidently a pagan who believed in the power of the statues in the story; but the governor in the story cannot have believed in the statues at the time, because he was directly responsible for their confiscation, which Constantius had permitted but not commanded. Why should an old man tell a story blaming himself for the last forty years of appalling devastation of Thrace and Illyricum by the Goths and Huns, especially when he knew his story was not true? Surely an aged pagan who invented a fable to show the efficacy of paganism would at least claim to have acted on the orders of the Christian emperor.

No distinguished Valerius who was a governor in Thrace under Constantius II and could have lived until 416 is otherwise known[34]. There was, however, a distinguished pagan Valerius whom Olympiodorus is very likely to have met in 416: Leontius' elder son, then aged about twenty, who was evidently living with his father at Athens when Olympiodorus visited the city. This identification has already been proposed by Brian Croke, who takes the story as evidence for an invasion of the Huns in 422. According to Croke, Olympiodorus referred to Constantius III, but only in order to date the discovery of the statues to 421. Assuming Photius' summary to be misleading, Croke further argues that the emperor whom Valerius consulted was not Constantius III but Theodosius II, who then ruled Thrace[35].

These suggestions, however, seem incompatible with the chronology of Olympiodorus, who placed the incident in his narrative not in 421 but in 416, when he visited Valerius' father at Athens. Moreover, besides relying on a dubious date of 422 for the invasion of the Huns, Croke must explain away the absence of a Gothic invasion at this time and ignore the other obviously mythical features of the report. Besides, Valerius could not have been a governor even in 421, the year before his sister became empress, because he was then still a private citizen at Athens. The final and decisive objection is that Olympiodorus could hardly have dared to write, in a work addressed to Theodosius II, that Theodosius himself, by authorizing the statues' destruction, had brought on sudden and catastrophic invasions of Goths,

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[34] Cf. *PLRE* I, pp. 940-4.

[35] B. Croke, "Evidence for the Hun Invasion of Thrace in ad 422", *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, xviii (1977), 347-67, esp. 358-64; Croke's argument is accepted by Gillett, "Date and Circumstances", pp. 15-16.

Huns, and Sarmatians after a long period of peace, when Theodosius and any other well-informed reader would have known that the whole story was, at the least, wildly exaggerated[36].

Alan Cameron suggests instead that "the text of this fragment, as preserved in Photius, may be garbled, as the invasions alluded to took place long before the reign of Constantius III. Possibly Valerius, governor of Thrace contemporaneously with Olympiodorus, told him of a discovery made in the reign of one of the earlier Constantii"[37]. While the conclusion that Photius' summary is defective is almost inescapable, another explanation seems more probable. Olympiodorus prefaced his account of his efforts to make Leontius a professor with a description of Leontius and his family as they then were. In this description, the historian mentioned Leontius' son Valerius, and identified him as a future high official; because Olympiodorus was writing after 425, he knew that Valerius had later become *Comes Rei Privatae*. Olympiodorus included the fact that, in 416, when young Valerius was still a pagan like the rest of his family, he had repeated an old story he had heard about an unnamed, misguided, and presumably Christian governor of Thrace under Constantius II who had opened the Balkans to barbarian raids by confiscating some apotropaic statues. Photius, reading and summarizing Olympiodorus too hastily, misunderstood the future officeholder Valerius to be describing his own experiences as a governor. While generally a good scholar and not a bad summarizer, Photius was by no means incapable of such mistakes[38].

Next, Photius' summary records of Olympiodorus' visit to Athens: "The historian, discoursing about his sea voyage, says that he suffered many

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[36] This point is also made, with somewhat less force, by Blockley, *Classicizing Historians*, i. 164, n. 20.

[37] *PLRE* II, 1144, citing a "forthcoming" work by Cameron that seems not to have appeared.

[38] On mistakes in the *Bibliotheca*, see Treadgold, *Nature of the Bibliotheca*, pp. 67-80. Though it seems most likely that Photius was misled because Olympiodorus failed to give a name for the legendary governor of the story, Blockley, *Classicizing Historians*, i. 164, n. 20, suggests that the story's governor might have been named Valerius as well. This seems too great a coincidence, because the Latin name Valerius was not common in the East (the only others in *PLRE* II are Valerii 2, 5, 8, and 10), and especially because the protagonist of a legend might naturally be anonymous. The coincidence could be explained by supposing young Valerius described the governor as a grandfather for whom his grandson was named; but in that case, why should family members have passed on a legend that discredited their own ancestor?

pains and misfortunes. He says that he also put in at Athens, and that because of his zeal and care Leontius was raised to the chair of rhetoric, which he did not yet want". The summary then continues with Olympiodorus' description of how new students were initiated at Athens[39]. A little later, the summary mentions that Olympiodorus was accompanied by a certain Philtatius whom the Athenians commemorated with a statue, apparently because of Philtatius' prowess in dividing texts into clauses[40].

These descriptions of the activities of Olympiodorus and his colleague Philtatius at Athens suggest that he was a member of a commission of two or more literary men sent to Athens by the government. Apparently, the commissioners had a mandate to fill and perhaps even to endow or re-endow a chair of rhetoric. At the time, emperors took an active interest in such appointments; just nine years later, Theodosius II's government was to endow thirty-one professorships at Constantinople[41]. Perhaps Leontius was reluctant to accept the appointment because he was a philosopher and it was a chair of rhetoric, even though philosophy and rhetoric were by this time closely related[42]. In any case, Leontius soon changed his mind and was happy enough to hold the chair.

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Just after the mention of Philtatius and his statue at Athens, and just before a mention of the Western emperor Honorius' entering into his eleventh consulship at the beginning of 417, Photius' summary includes a detailed description by Olympiodorus of the oases in the Egyptian desert[43]. This description certainly looks as if it was based on first-hand observation. Though an Egyptian like Olympiodorus might of course have seen the oases earlier in his life, the position of the passage in his narrative indicates that he

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[39] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 60b.6-30 = Olympiodorus fr. 28 Blockley.

[40] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 61a.7-11 = Olympiodorus fr. 31 Blockley, discussed by Blockley, *Classicizing Historians*, ii. 218, n. 64.

[41] See Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 707-8.

[42] Cameron, "Empress and the Poet", pp. 274-5, points out that the chair's subject was rhetoric but, assuming that Leontius was a rhetorician rather than a philosopher, suggests that he may have been reluctant because he had converted to Christianity. Yet the evidence for his conversion (and for his being a rhetorician by training) is not convincing; see n. 14 above.

[43] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 61a.12-61b.10 = Olympiodorus, frs. 32 and 33 Blockley.

visited or revisited them in the latter part of 416, the same year as his visit to Athens.

The likelihood that Olympiodorus' trip to the oases was a continuation of his trip from Constantinople by way of Athens is strengthened by his reference to the "many pains and misfortunes" of his voyage of 416, suggesting a longer trip than just across the Aegean, and his statement that he "also" put in at Athens, implying that Olympiodorus went to other places as well. His description of the oases covered the weather, the wells, agriculture, and some fossils from which he concluded that the Great Oasis had once been an island. His description concludes with an assertion that Homer was a native of the nearby Thebaïd, like Olympiodorus himself. This last reference may well be an indication that Olympiodorus visited his home town of Thebes on the same trip, a fact Photius omitted.

If this journey had begun as an official one to Athens, it may have continued to be an official mission in Egypt. Modern historians usually assume that Olympiodorus was an enthusiastic traveler, who deliberately went about gathering material for his future history like Herodotus, whom he cites in this passage[44]. Yet any such impression is hard to defend from the evidence. Olympiodorus complained repeatedly about the dangers and discomforts of travel[45]. He declared his profession to be that of a poet rather than an historian, and called his work not a history but "raw material for a history"[46]. He went to the Huns, and probably to Athens, on government orders, not to research his history. Three or four years later, he travelled to the Blemmyes of Nubia, apparently again on an embassy. Since the Blemmyes lived just south of the Great Oasis and the Thebaïd, and often raided both of them, his journey there in 416 could have been an official trip to gather information about the Blemmyes, which as a native of the region he was especially qualified to do[47].

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[44] Cf. Thompson, "Olympiodorus of Thebes", p. 44 and n. 2, Matthews, "Olympiodorus", p. 80, and Cameron, "Wandering Poets", pp. 493-4. At Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 61a.29-31 = Olympiodorus fr.32 Blockley, the reference is to Herodotus 3.26.

[45] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 58b.38-9, 60b.6-7, and 62a.1-2= Olympiodorus frs. 19, 28, and 35 Blockley.

[46] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 56b.12-21.

[47] On the Blemmyes' raids, see D. A. Welsby, *The Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia* (London, 2002), pp. 16-20. For the sources, see *F[ontes] H[istoriae] N[ubiorum: Textual Sources for the History of the Middle Nile Region between the Eighth Century BC and the Sixth Century AD]*, ed. T. Eide et al. (Bergen, 1998), esp. iii.1123-5, describing Blemmyan raids on the region of Syene c.395.

After 416, Olympiodorus seems to have returned to Constantinople once more, because his next visit to Egypt required another difficult sea voyage. This apparently occurred around 419 or 420, because in Photius' summary the account comes between events datable to 418 and 421[48]. During this voyage to Egypt, according to the summary, Olympiodorus' ship was hit by a meteor and almost sank. The author himself barely survived, and his prized parrot evidently died, since at this point he described it in something that looks like an obituary and mentioned that he had owned it for twenty years[49].

Photius continues:

> The historian says that, when he put in at Thebes and Syene [Aswan] to make inquiries, the ethnarchs and prophets of the barbarians around Talmis (that is, of the Blemmyes) were eager to meet with him, because [their] prophecy led them to this. "And they conducted me", he says, "as far as Talmis itself, so that I could investigate those regions which are separated by a distance of five days' [journey] from Philae, up to the town called Prima, which in ancient times was the first town of the Thebaïd [as one came] from barbarian territory. Therefore, it was named Prima (that is, 'first') by the Romans in the Roman language [i.e., Latin]; and now it is [still] called that, even though it has long been settled by the barbarians along with four other towns: Phoenicon, Chiris, Thapis, and Talmis". He says he learned that near those places were emerald mines, from which the kings of the Egyptians used to obtain emeralds in abundance. "And these [mines]", he says, "the prophets of the barbarians urged me to see". But that was not possible without authorization by the emperor[50].

My translation differs from earlier ones in three significant ways. The phrase I translate as "to make inquiries" (ἱστορίας ἕνεκα) has previously been translated "to do historical research". The word I understand to mean "[the Blemmyan prophets'] prophecy" (ἡ φήμη) has been understood to mean "[Olympiodorus'] fame". The words I take to mean "authorization by the emperor [Theodosius II]" (βασιλικῆς προστάξεως) have been taken to mean

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[48] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 61b.39-40 (death of Vallia in 418) and 62a.27 (an incident during the co-emperorship of Honorius and Constantius III in 421) = Olympiodorus frs. 34 and 36 Blockley.

[49] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 62a.1-8 = Olympiodorus fr.35.1 Blockley.

[50] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 62a.9-26 = Olympiodorus fr.35.2 Blockley.

"authorization by the king [of the Blemmyes]"[51]. Although these previously accepted translations are compatible with Photius' highly compressed Greek, none of them seems to fit the situation.

In the first place, Olympiodorus is unlikely to have been collecting exotic information for his history around his own home town of Thebes, even on the doubtful assumption that he had the idea of writing a history this early[52]. He seems to have been on an official mission to the Blemmyes, and his first step was to go to the Roman territory nearest to them in order to inquire whether they would receive him. Here the appropriate meaning of the Greek word *historia* is "inquiry" rather than "history" or "historical research". Second, in deciding whether to receive him, the ethnarchs (tribal chieftains) and prophets of the Blemmyes are unlikely to have known or cared about Olympiodorus' modest reputation as a poet, courtier, traveler, or anything else. What the Blemmyan prophets (and ethnarchs) considered in making their decision was divination. Here the appropriate meaning of the Greek word *phēmē* is "prophecy" rather than "fame". Third, the prophets of the Blemmyes would certainly not have urged Olympiodorus to go to see anything that their authorities had not already granted him permission to see. Nor would Olympiodorus, who calls even the king of the Huns a mere *rex* (ῥήξ), have referred to any of the petty ethnarchs of the Blemmyes as a *basileus* (βασιλεύς), the proper title of a Roman emperor[53]. If Olympiodorus was on a mission for the emperor, he was supposed to go only where the emperor had authorized him to go.

This passage can usefully be compared with Photius' summary of the preface that Hierocles of Alexandria wrote for the book he addressed to Olympiodorus. There Hierocles says that his friend "distinguished himself on Roman embassies, and attached to the Roman sphere of influence many of the greatest of the barbarian tribes; these [embassies] also became the occasions of the greatest honors for him from [those tribes]"[54]. Though even today writers of prefaces often flatter their dedicatees, Hierocles could scarcely have written such words for his friend to read if Olympiodorus' sole embassy had been to the Huns. Their king, Charaton, had paid him no honor

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[51] Cf. Thompson, "Olympiodorus of Thebes", p. 44, Blockley, *Classicizing Historians*, ii. 199-201, and *FHN*, iii. 1127.

[52] A point already made by Gillett, "Date and Circumstances", p. 13.

[53] Some Blemmyan potentates did use the title, but even they usually called themselves "little king" (βασιλίσκος) to show their subordination to the Roman emperor; see *FHN*, iii. 1150, n. 777 and 1153.

[54] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 214, 171b.26-9.

and showed no respect for the empire. Charaton was enraged with Olympiodorus and with the Romans over Donatus' murder, and had to be bribed into sullen acquiescence.

Olympiodorus' history and Photius' summary of it most probably included all Olympiodorus' embassies up to 424, because the one showed no reluctance to write about himself, and the other was interested in biographical details about the authors he summarized[55]. While Olympiodorus could no doubt have gone on other embassies after 425, Hierocles appears to have written his preface before that date. In 424-5, Olympiodorus evidently went on an important mission to Rome that Hierocles would have been sure to include among his friend's diplomatic exploits had it already occurred; instead, Hierocles referred only to embassies to barbarian tribes.

In fact, though Hierocles doubtless meant to include the embassy to the Huns as one of the embassies on which Olympiodorus had distinguished himself, the remarks in the preface appear better suited to Olympiodorus' visit to the Blemmyes in 419-20. The Blemmyes were divided into several fairly important tribes headed by ethnarchs, who, like their prophets, had treated Olympiodorus as an honored guest. Several scholars have already suggested that Olympiodorus was sent by Theodosius II's government as an ambassador to the Blemmyes[56]. If he was, Hierocles' preface and Olympiodorus' account of his journey to the Blemmyes can readily be combined to make a coherent account.

This would run approximately as follows. In 419 or 420, Theodosius' government sent Olympiodorus to negotiate an agreement with the ethnarchs of the Blemmyes, who had presumably been raiding Upper Egypt and the Egyptian oases as they had long done and would long continue to do[57]. Olympiodorus' assignment included gathering information on the Blemmyes, as he had already done during his earlier visit to the oases and the Thebaïd. This time, when his boat or barge arrived in the Thebaïd, he first visited his home town of Thebes, then proceeded to the border town of Syene. In both places, he inquired about the Blemmyes, and from Syene he sent to their ethnarchs for permission to meet them. The ethnarchs referred their decision to their prophets, who used some sort of divination to determine whether or not their gods approved of receiving the ambassador.

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[55] See Treadgold, *Nature of the Bibliotheca*, pp. 52-66.

[56] Blockley, *Classicizing Historians*, i.27, Gillett, "Date and Circumstances", p. 13, and *FHN*, iii.1128.

[57] See n. 47 above.

Luckily for Olympiodorus, their divination produced an affirmative response: the prophecy made the ethnarchs and prophets eager to receive him. Sending for him, they brought him first to Talmis (Kalābsha), and from there to Prima (Premis = Qasr Ibrīm), "Phoenicon" (as yet unidentified), "Chiris" (perhaps Hierasycaminus = Maharraqa), and "Thapis" (Taphis = Tafa)[58]. Apparently, Olympiodorus established friendly relations with the rulers of all five settlements. The prophets were ready to conduct him further to the emerald mines, but going there would have exceeded his mandate from the emperor in some way that the summary fails to explain. Perhaps Olympiodorus was authorized to travel just five days' journey from the frontier; this would have been far enough to meet with the ethnarchs who had sent raiders into imperial territory and were the only ones of interest to the imperial government. The emerald mines were evidently further away, at the Emerald Mountain (Jabal Zabara) north of Berenice near the Red Sea[59]. Nonetheless, the Blemmyan prophets' favorable prophecy had enabled Olympiodorus to succeed on his mission, even though the Blemmyes did resume raiding the Thebaïd a few years later[60].

On his way back to Constantinople, Olympiodorus naturally went down the Nile by way of Thebes, where he seems to have learned of the death of his adopted son. Much distressed by the news, he continued down the Nile to Alexandria, where he visited his old friend Hierocles. The striking contrast between the fortunate outcome of Olympiodorus' embassy and the unfortunate death of his son evidently gave Hierocles the idea of writing his treatise in seven books *On Providence and Fate, and the Relation of What We Control to the Divine Power*. Hierocles hoped that its philosophical

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[58] See the comments in *FHN*, iii. 1126-8. Though the editors reject the obvious and customary identification of Prima with Premis because Olympiodorus places it within what had formerly been Roman territory, their reliance on Olympiodorus' mastery of ancient historical geography appears misplaced. The usual identification of this Phoenicon with another place of that name at Al-Laqayta in the desert near Coptus seems very unlikely, because, like the other places visited by Olympiodorus, it should have been on the Nile south of Aswan.

[59] An alternative explanation would be that the emerald mines were subject to the empire, and that the emperor's permission was necessary to visit them because they belonged to him. But this seems improbable, because a somewhat confused text by Epiphanius of Salamis indicates that the Blemmyes had taken over these emerald mines by 394; see *FHN*, iii. 1115-21. On archaeological evidence for the mines, see I. Shaw, J. Bunbury, and R. Jameson, "Emerald Mining in Roman and Byzantine Egypt", *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, xii (1999), 203-15.

[60] Cf. *FHN*, iii. 1138-41.

observations, which he addressed to Olympiodorus, would help to console him for his son's death. After composing the work, Hierocles sent a copy to his friend, who by that time, presumably, was back at Constantinople[61].

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In 421 Athenaïs, the daughter of Olympiodorus' friend Leontius, married Theodosius II and took the Christian name Eudocia. Though by then Leontius had died and Eudocia had become a Christian, Olympiodorus found himself an old family friend of the powerful empress and her two brothers Valerius and Gessus, who soon became high officials[62]. After these connections had enhanced Olympiodorus' standing at court, he was sent to the West in 424-5 with the powerful and long-serving *Magister Officiorum* Helio. The *Magister Officiorum* was one of the emperor's highest-ranking ministers, whose general responsibilities included diplomacy[63].

Helio's mission in 424 was to install Theodosius II's young cousin Valentinian III as Western Roman emperor in place of the usurper John (423-5). As Theodosius' representative, Helio proclaimed Valentinian Caesar at Thessalonica in October 424 and travelled with him and his mother, Galla Placidia, through Dalmatia to Aquileia. After an Eastern army captured the usurper and brought him to Aquileia for execution, Helio, Valentinian, and Placidia went on, probably by sea, to Rome, where Helio proclaimed Valentinian Augustus and ruler of the Western Roman Empire. Valentinian's proclamation at Rome, which took place on 23 October 425, was the latest event described in Olympiodorus' history[64].

Although we have no conclusive proof that Olympiodorus went to the West at this time, the assumption that he did is traditional and almost inevitable. A voyage to Italy seems indicated by Olympiodorus' elaborate demonstration, which Photius mentions approvingly without summarizing,

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[61] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 214, 171b.19-32. The adopted son may have returned to Thebes, perhaps not long before, to look after the family property there (unless Olympiodorus received the news of his death by a letter from Constantinople).

[62] See n. 18 above.

[63] See A. Gillett, *Envoys and Political Communication in the Late Antique West, 411-533* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 21-2 and 222-7, and cf. Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 575-84.

[64] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 63b.2 8-31 = Olympiodorus fr.43.1 Blockley, and Philostorgius 12.13-14 = Olympiodorus fr. 43.2 Blockley. Cf. *PLRE* II, Helion 1.

that Odysseus' adventures had occurred along the coasts of Italy rather than of Sicily[65]. Olympiodorus' extensive, detailed, intimate, and accurate knowledge of Western affairs since 407, particularly conditions at Rome, could only have come from Western sources. The idea that he drew on a single Western literary source, which would be unattested, is hard to reconcile with the obvious similarities of composition and outlook between Olympiodorus' accounts of events in the West and his digressions on his activities in the East[66]. On the other hand, Olympiodorus expressed such amazement near the end of his history at the magnificence of the monuments of Rome and the wealth of its aristocracy that he appears to have been visiting the city for the first time in 425[67].

As one would expect of an official envoy of the Eastern government, Olympiodorus evidently had access to the archives of the city prefect of Rome. They were the obvious source for Olympiodorus' statement that, according to the then-prefect, fourteen thousand new residents of Rome were enrolled in a single day soon after the city's sack by the Visigoths in 410[68]. The part of Zosimus' history dependent on Olympiodorus, which is about ten times more detailed than Photius' summary, sometimes gives prominence to the views of figures who were relatively unimportant at the time but later might have served as Olympiodorus' sources at Rome[69]. One of these, according to Matthews, was Justinian, formerly adviser to the great general Stilicho, who had been the most powerful man in the Western empire until his downfall and execution in 408. Justinian, who survived his master's ruin, may have been largely responsible for Olympiodorus' favorable view of Stilicho[70].

Several more figures in this part of Zosimus' text look like possible acquaintances and sources of Olympiodorus, though thus far none has been conjectured to be such. One is the imperial notary John, described as a friend of the Visigothic king, Alaric. John, who may have been Olympiodorus'

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[65] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 63b.5-10 = Olympiodorus fr. 42 Blockley.

[66] As observed by Matthews, "Olympiodorus of Thebes", p. 90.

[67] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 63a.17-63b.4 = Olympiodorus fr. 41 Blockley.

[68] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 59b.30-5 = Olympiodorus fr. 25 Blockley.

[69] Paschoud, "Le debut de l'ouvrage historique", pp. 186-8, reckons that Zosimus summarized Olympiodorus at a rate of roughly 1:4, while Photius summarized him at a rate of 1:40.

[70] Zosimus 5.30.4-5; cf. *PLRE* II, Iustinianus 2; cf. Matthews, "Olympiodorus of Thebes", pp. 89-90, and *PLRE* I, Stilicho.

source for an embassy to Alaric that John had accompanied in 408, may also have shaped Olympiodorus' relatively favorable view of Alaric. Since John served the usurper Attalus as *Magister Officiorum* in 409 and the Emperor Honorius as prefect of Italy in 412-13 and perhaps again in 422, he could have been an authoritative source for the whole period covered by Olympiodorus' history[71]. Another possible informant was a certain Palladius, who was assigned the task of raising tribute for Alaric from the Roman aristocracy in 408. Palladius could have been the source of Olympiodorus' reports of senatorial wealth, especially before the sack of Rome in 410. The same Palladius seems to have served Honorius as prefect of Italy between 416 and 421, so that he, too, could have given Olympiodorus information about the West for the period the history covered[72].

Still another possible informant is the *Comes Rei Privatae* Heliocrates, who in 408-9 acted so moderately when Honorius assigned him to confiscate the goods of Stilicho's partisans that he had to seek sanctuary from the emperor's wrath in a church. Heliocrates could have passed on still more information about public and private wealth in the West to Olympiodorus, who evidently approved of him[73]. One last possible source is Jovius, a learned ambassador sent by the Gallic usurper Constantine to offer Honorius an alliance in 409. Jovius' appearance in Zosimus' text introduces a long and detailed digression on affairs in Gaul, for which Jovius may well have been Olympiodorus' source[74]. Justinian, John, Palladius, Heliocrates, and Jovius were all witnesses to major events in Olympiodorus' history, probably resided at Rome in 425, and seem to have held views endorsed by Olympiodorus.

Photius' abbreviated summary generally lacks the sort of detail that could reveal such possible sources. Yet R. C. Blockley suggests that one source may have been Candidianus, who as an adviser of the Visigothic king, Ataulf, encouraged the king to marry Honorius' sister Galla Placidia in 414. This seems to have been the same Candidianus whom Olympiodorus praises for his exploits as a general during the Eastern expedition that restored Placidia and her son Valentinian to the West in 425. Candidianus could be the source of Olympiodorus' obvious familiarity with the public and private lives

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[71] Zosimus 5.40.2-4; cf. *PLRE* I, Iohannes 2.

[72] Zosimus 5.41.5; cf. *PLRE* II, Palladius 19 (?); cf. Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 63a.31-63b.4 = Olympiodorus fr. 41.2 Blockley.

[73] Zosimus 5.35.4 and esp. 45.3-4; cf. *PLRE* II, Heliocrates 1.

[74] Zosimus 6.1.1-2; cf. *PLRE* II, Iovius 1.

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of Ataulf, Placidia, and Placidia's second husband, Constantius III[75]. Candidianus may also have contributed to Olympiodorus' marked partiality for the Western general Boniface, who had in any case sided not only with Placidia but also with the Eastern government in its war with the Western usurper John between 423 and 425[76]. While this list of possible informants is admittedly speculative, we have every reason to think that Olympiodorus had access to many important people and documents at Rome.

E. A. Thompson concludes that Olympiodorus finished writing before 427, when Boniface was declared a public enemy and ceased to be a suitable person to praise without reservations[77]. If Thompson is right, Olympiodorus probably spent just a few months gathering information in Rome. Even if he had arrived a bit early for Valentinian's coronation, say in September 425, within a year or so he was presumably back in Constantinople writing his history before completing it sometime in 427. Though this would have been quick work for a composition in twenty-two books, the history's style does seem to have shown distinct signs of hasty composition.

Photius, who had read the entire history in its original form, describes Olympiodorus' writing as

> clear but insipid, careless, and falling into commonplace slang, so that the work is not even worthy to be accounted a history. Even he, perhaps acknowledging this [fact], affirms that he has not prepared these things as a history, but rather provided them as raw material for a history—so misshapen and formless did the style of his work appear even to him. For it is not adorned with a single stylistic virtue, unless someone might maintain that in some places it approaches simplicity; yet, by degenerating in to vulgarity through this [simplicity's] lowness and disreputability, it is utterly spoiled. Even while calling these things "raw material for a history", he nonetheless separates them into books and attempts to embellish them with prefaces, and addresses the "history" to the emperor

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[75] See Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 59a.22-31, 59b.13-29, and 63b.11-31 = Olympiodorus frs. 22, 24, and 43.1 Blockley; cf. *PLRE* II, Candidianus 2 and 3, and Blockley, *Classicizing Historians*, i. 34-5.

[76] See Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 62b.23-7 and 62b.36-63a.17 = Olympiodorus frs. 38 and 40 Blockley: cf. *PLRE* II, Bonifatius 3.

[77] Thompson, "Olympiodorus of Thebes", p. 44.

Theodosius, who was the nephew of Honorius and [Galla] Placidia and son of Arcadius[78].

Since Photius was quite ready to praise a simple but elegant stylist like Arrian, his criticism of Olympiodorus should be taken seriously, if not necessarily as the last word on the subject[79].

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That Olympiodorus' work was sloppily written suggests but does not prove that it was finished soon after 425. Boniface was restored to imperial favour around 430, and after that date Olympiodorus could once again have praised him freely. Frank Clover argues that Olympiodorus wrote around 440, on four grounds[80]. First, Clover identifies a "Maximus" whom Olympiodorus described as giving praetorian games for his son with a Maximus who could not have had a son of the appropriate age until 430 or so; but this identification is very dubious[81]. Second, Clover observes that Olympiodorus' work was used by the church historian Philostorgius, who in Clover's opinion wrote in the late 430s; but this date seems actually to undermine Clover's argument by implying that Olympiodorus wrote some years earlier than 440[82]. Third, Photius' summary includes a slightly awkward reference to a man who held the rank of *patricius* in 409; this, according to Clover, shows the influence of a meaning of the title that came into use only around 435. Yet if this is indeed an anachronism (and it is not an obvious one), it can be attributed more plausibly to Photius in the ninth century than to a well-informed contemporary like Olympiodorus[83].

Clover's case really depends on a single passage in Photius' summary that refers to Alaric's raiding in late 410:

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[78] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 56b.15-29 (at 56b.20, correct the spelling of ἀνίδεος to ἀνείδεος).

[79] Cf. Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 92, 72b.40-73a.30.

[80] F. Clover, "Olympiodorus of Thebes and the *Historia Augusta*", *Antiquitas*, ser. 4, xv (1983), 127-56.

[81] *Ibid.*, pp. 128-9; cf. *PLRE* II, Petronius Maximus 22, suggesting that Olympiodorus' Maximus was Petronius Maximus' father and the son was Petronius Maximus himself, whose praetorian games would have been held c. 411.

[82] *Ibid.*, pp. 135-41. My own opinion is that Philostorgius wrote between 427 and 433; see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 126-28.

[83] *Ibid.*, pp. 141-44; *PLRE* II, Iovius 3 (the *patricius* at issue), sees no difficulty, and neither do I.

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> Rhegium [modern Reggio di Calabria] is the chief city of Bruttium. The historian says that when Alaric wanted to cross over from it to Sicily he was held back. For a statue standing [at Rhegium], he says, dedicated by a magic spell, prevented [Alaric's] crossing. It had been dedicated, as he says fantastically, by the ancients, both to ward off the fire of [Mount] Aetna and to prevent barbarians from crossing the sea. For by one foot [of the statue] there was an undying flame, and by the other an imperishable spring. When [the statue] was destroyed later, Sicily suffered from both the fire of Aetna and the ravages of the barbarians. Asclepius, appointed curator of the possessions of Constantius and Placidia in Sicily, was the one who pulled down this statue[84].

Asclepius evidently held his position sometime between the marriage of Constantius III to Galla Placidia in 417 and Constantius' death in 421. Though Clover argues that the estates might later have been designated by the names of their former owners, at any time after Constantius' death they would more naturally have been called the property of Placidia alone. Clover points out that an ancient statue did stand at Rhegium at one time, even if the references to a perpetual flame and spring around its feet show that Olympiodorus' account includes a large element of pagan myth. The real question is when we should date the eruption or eruptions of Aetna and the barbarian raid or raids mentioned by Olympiodorus as the consequences of the statue's destruction. Clover acknowledges that the eruption of Aetna cannot be dated independently: while the volcano had not erupted for some time before Orosius finished writing his history in 417, we could deduce that much from Olympiodorus' own reference to Constantius. Clover tries, however, to identify the barbarian raids with piracy by barbarian deserters from the Roman army recorded in 438 and plundering by Gaiseric's Vandals recorded in 440[85].

However, a comparison with Valerius' vague story of the similar statues in Thrace indicates that Olympiodorus would have given more details if the barbarian raids on Sicily had been real events of much consequence. He would almost certainly have named the Vandals if they had been the raiders. Even more conclusively, Olympiodorus stated that the miraculous statue was meant to stop barbarians from crossing the straits of Messina from Rhegium, and neither the pirates nor the Vandals came from that direction. The raiding alluded to by Olympiodorus, which may even have been invented by

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[84] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 58a.20-31= Olympiodorus fr. 16 Blockley.
[85] Clover, "Olympiodorus of Thebes", pp. 144-50.

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disgruntled pagans, has evidently passed unrecorded in our scanty sources, and could easily have occurred before 427.

Though Clover's case is far from cogent, his conclusion is accepted by Andrew Gillett, who believes that Philostorgius wrote after the 430s. Yet even if that were true, Olympiodorus could still have written anytime earlier than that. Gillett adds that Olympiodorus must have written after 439, because the ecclesiastical historian Socrates wrote soon after that year in Constantinople without using Olympiodorus' work, though Philostorgius and Sozomen used it later[86]. This argument, however, depends on assuming much more about the circulation of books in Constantinople than is justifiable. At the most, Socrates' failure to use Olympiodorus' history would suggest that it had a somewhat restricted circulation before 439, not that it was as yet unwritten.

We, therefore, have no persuasive reason not to accept Thompson's dating of Olympiodorus' history to around 427, which would explain the work's lack of polish, its praise of Boniface without reference to his later troubles, and its apparent failure to record any events after 425. By 427, Olympiodorus would have been nearing the age of sixty. Nothing is known of his later life and death, unless he is the author of the *Blemmyomachia* (War with the Blemmyes), an anonymous epic poem preserved in a fragmentary papyrus, and its date is later than 427. Both suppositions are highly uncertain, especially if the papyrus has been correctly dated to around 400[87]. The problem is of considerable interest, but may not be solvable and at this point needs to be treated by a papyrologist.

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Olympiodorus' history must have been a very peculiar work, as Photius noticed and its author himself acknowledged by calling it "raw material for a history". His reasons for writing it, and especially for writing it as he did, are by no means obvious. It was certainly not a formal narrative history in classicizing Greek of the traditional type, which Eunapius of Sardis had recently revived after a hundred-year lapse[88]. Although Eunapius'

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[86] Gillett, "Date and Circumstances", pp. 3-12.

[87] See Clover, "Olympiodorus of Thebes", pp. 153-6, posing the possibility that the war of the Romans with the Blemmyes, the subject of the poem, was fought in 442. The poem is edited with a commentary by E. Livrea, *Anonymi Fortasse Olympiodori Thebani Blemyomachia* (*P. Berol. 5003*) (Meisenheim am Glan, 1978).

[88] On Eunapius, see esp. Blockley, *Classicizing Historians*, i. 1-26.

History to Continue Dexippus is also lost today, a number of verbatim excerpts survive and Zosimus drew on all of it. It is thus much better preserved than Olympiodorus' work, of which only a few words survive in direct quotations and only about a fifth was used by Zosimus. Eunapius resembled Olympiodorus in being a well-educated pagan, but not in much else. Olympiodorus' narrative, which began with the year 407 and dealt mainly with the West, did not directly continue Eunapius' work, which ended with 404 and dealt mainly with the East. Yet the otherwise knowledgeable Olympiodorus presumably knew of Eunapius' history, which had become the standard treatment in Greek of the times before his own. After his preface, Olympiodorus opened with a digression on Stilicho's earlier career beginning with 395, when Eunapius had ceased to cover Western events in any detail[89]. Moreover, Olympiodorus did include considerable material on the East—probably a good deal more than survives today. Therefore, to some extent, Olympiodorus' work could be considered a continuation of Eunapius' history, and Zosimus used it as such[90].

Even when complete, however, Olympiodorus' history can scarcely have included a continuous narrative of Eastern events. One conceivable explanation for its strange selection of material would be that Olympiodorus expected another Eastern author eventually to write a full history to continue Eunapius, which would combine readily accessible Eastern material with the more obscure information that Olympiodorus had gathered on his travels in both East and West. Such an expectation could also explain the informality that Photius found in Olympiodorus' prose style, but is hard to reconcile with the history's length and dedication to the emperor.

From a practical point of view, Olympiodorus' style had some virtues. Photius' negative judgment should not be taken to mean that Olympiodorus used obscenities or made ignorant grammatical errors. The term in Photius' criticism that I have translated as "slang" (χυδαιολογία) is indeed pejorative, but refers to ordinary vernacular Greek, which everyone used in conversation and in practical writing with no literary pretensions. What annoyed Photius was that Olympiodorus had written a literary work without using literary language. Photius admits that Olympiodorus' style was clear, and it was doubtless much easier to read than the more rhetorical prose of formal histories. Photius also objects that portions of the work were

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[89] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 56b.30-41 = Olympiodorus fr. 1 Blockley. Cf. Matthews, "Olympiodorus", pp. 87-8.

[90] Cf. D. F. Buck, "Dexippus, Eunapius, Olympiodorus: Continuation and Imitation", *Ancient History Bulletin*, i (1987), 48-50.

melodramatic. Unlike Eunapius and most other literary historians, Olympiodorus included dates by consular years, Latinisms and even quotations in Latin, topographical details, and statistics for armies, distances, sums of money, and other such items[91]. His composition was essentially annalistic, and perhaps explicitly so. His first decad of books averaged exactly two books per year from 407 to 412, and the remaining twelve books averaged exactly one book per year from 413 to 425.

Olympiodorus' writing was not lacking in stylistic flourishes. It included at least two prefaces, one placed at the beginning and presumably the other to introduce the last twelve books[92]. The history quoted at least one line of verse, apparently Olympiodorus' own, on the city of Rome: "One house is like a town—the city has a myriad"[93]. Olympiodorus ventured to use the dual number (for two of something) which, obsolete for centuries even in ordinary literary Greek, had become a feature of the formal Atticizing style[94]. He may even have inserted a few invented speeches of the kind that had been standard in formal histories ever since Thucydides[95]. Even if we entertain the possibility that Olympiodorus himself planned to turn his materials into a finished history but died before he could do so, we might still ask why he allowed his preliminary draft to be circulated with a dedication to the emperor in the version read by Photius, as his preface showed he did.

Perhaps the best explanation of these anomalies is that Olympiodorus' work was not dedicated to Theodosius II as a formality, but really was addressed to him, as an official memorandum, in the expectation that he would at least glance at it. Its intended readership might thus have consisted of the emperor, his learned wife Athenaïs-Eudocia, his educated sister Pulcheria, and his principal advisers[96]. The most important of the latter

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[91] See Thompson, "Olympiodorus", pp. 47-50, Matthews, "Olympiodorus", pp. 85-8, and Blockley, *Classicizing Historians*, i. 37-8.

[92] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 56b.25-6.

[93] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 63a.22 = Olympiodorus fr. 41 Blockley.

[94] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 60a.35-6 (ἀμφοῖν ταῖν χεροῖν--"both of their hands") = Olympiodorus fr. 27.11 Blockley. One might possibly argue that, since Photius himself sometimes used the dual (cf. *Bibliotheca*, cod. 77, 54a.36 on the two editions of Eunapius, probably influenced by Eunapius' style) he could have added it in his summary of Olympiodorus. But the point of using the dual was to show off one's learning, and in an abridgement of someone else's work the reader would naturally assume that the dual came from the original.

[95] Cf. Zosimus 6.1, 7.3, and 8.1-2.

[96] See Gillett, "Date and Circumstances", p. 26, though his interpretation is somewhat different from mine: "The history is a monograph about affairs of state

was the *Magister Officiorum* Helio, who had led the Eastern government's delegation to the West in 424-5 that apparently included Olympiodorus[97]. Olympiodorus' history would therefore have been a sort of confidential report or briefing book on his government missions, especially the one to Rome. Quite possibly Olympiodorus was sent to Rome with the specific assignment of writing such a report on conditions in the Western Roman Empire, since the most recent connected account of the West in Greek, in Eunapius' history, was some twenty years old.

After his trips to the oases, the Thebaïd, and the Blemmyes, which seem partly to have been official fact-finding missions, Olympiodorus had presumably written similar reports that he could later have incorporated into his history. While we lack any comparable government memoranda of this period, we can scarcely doubt that they existed. Some were probably composed in an elaborate style that showed off their authors' learning; but any that were intended to be useful to the government should have been written in relatively intelligible language to avoid obscurities that might have serious practical consequences. Such reports would also have been written more or less rapidly, perhaps to a deadline, so as to be ready while they reflected current conditions and could inform current policy. Although Olympiodorus' report was very long – perhaps far longer than his superiors had expected – it was meant to be readable, interesting, and useful.

One reason why Olympiodorus must have wanted his history to be read was that it made policy recommendations to the Eastern government, though, as the work of a pagan addressing Christians, it needed to make some of its points discreetly and indirectly. Olympiodorus maintained that, even while the Christian government continued to reject the pagan gods, pagans and especially their cult objects could still offer practical help to the empire if they were respected, and do harm if they were not. Thus, the history ascribed the deaths of Stilicho and his widow Serena to their plundering of pagan temple treasures[98]. According to the history, when Alaric's siege reduced Rome to starvation, Pope Innocent I was ready to allow secret prayers to the gods by pagan priests, who, however, refused because only public prayers could be efficacious[99]. The history reported that in collecting tribute

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immediately relevant to Olympiodorus' contemporaries ... [and] addressed Olympiodorus's peers, imperial servants concerned with the higher administration of the empire".

[97] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 63b.17-31 = Olympiodorus fr. 43 Blockley.

[98] Zosimus 5.38.2-5.

[99] Zosimus 5.41.1-3.

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to raise the siege, the people of Rome melted down a statue of the goddess of Virtue, who accordingly deserted them[100]. The history praised the pagan barbarian general Generidus, who accepted a command in Illyricum only after Honorius repealed a law forbidding pagans to hold office[101], and we have already seen the disastrous consequences that the history attributed to the destruction of the apotropaic statues at Rhegium and in Thrace. In 421, the history recounted that the pagan priest Libanius was about to defeat the barbarians by magic when Constantius III executed him at the insistence of Galla Placidia[102]. Though Olympiodorus was probably too cautious to draw an explicit moral for Theodosius II from these stories, their tendency was unmistakable.

In his work, Olympiodorus also argued that conciliating barbarians was often preferable to fighting them. He endorsed Stilicho's negotiations with Alaric and his Visigoths, and deplored the court intrigue that had led Honorius to execute Stilicho in 408[103]. The history blamed Honorius for failing either to win over or to ward off Alaric, and for refusing Alaric's moderate demands[104]. As has already been noted, in recounting his embassy to the Huns in 412, Olympiodorus expressed disapproval of the murder of Donatus, which angered the Huns' king, Charaton. The history apparently approved of an agreement between Honorius and the Visigothic king, Ataulf, under which Ataulf defeated and killed the Gallic rebel Jovinus in 413[105]. No doubt Olympiodorus depicted his own mission to the Blemmyes of Nubia as another example of successful negotiation with barbarians.

The history also advised, at least implicitly and probably explicitly, that the Eastern Roman government should lend strong support to the Western Roman government. This was, in any case, established Eastern policy by 425. The history showed the terrible effects of the earlier estrangement between the Eastern government of Arcadius and the Western government guided by Stilicho, and evidently sympathized with Stilicho. It also made a case that the Western empire, despite all of its tribulations, remained reasonably strong and wealthy, and was certainly not a lost cause. The history was mostly favorable to the government of Galla Placidia, and in particular to her partisan Boniface.

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[100] Zosimus 5.41.6-7.

[101] Zosimus 5.46.2-5.

[102] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 62a.27-36 = Olympiodorus fr. 36 Blockley.

[103] Zosimus 5.29.5-9, 31.4-6, and 34.5-7.

[104] Zosimus 5.36.1-3 and 50.2-51.2.

[105] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 80, 59a.3-16 = Olympiodorus fr. 20.1 Blockley.

If the Eastern government tolerated pagans, negotiated with barbarians, and supported the Western government, Olympiodorus seems to have foreseen a bright future for the empire in both East and West[106].

In the event, the Eastern government was not very tolerant of pagans; was, if anything, too conciliatory towards barbarians; and was fairly supportive of the Western empire, which however had a future that was unhappy and short. Not having written the sort of elegant history that would appeal to learned contemporaries or to a learned posterity, Olympiodorus can never have had many readers. Circulation of his work may even have been limited to government circles as late as 439, when Socrates made no use of it, though Philostorgius and a few others were able to consult it[107]. Photius, despite his contempt for its style, clearly found it of much interest.

Modern historians have been inclined to praise Olympiodorus' work, since even what little remains of it is an excellent source, preserving unique evidence and the viewpoint of an intelligent imperial functionary. Though Thompson's conclusion that Olympiodorus "had original and striking views on the way history should be written" seems overstated, Photius was evidently short-sighted in criticizing a work that failed to meet his expectations of what a history should be[108]. Blockley reasonably remarks that, "in facing the realities of the Roman circumstances in the West", Olympiodorus "produced a work of insight and quality"[109]. Yet what Olympiodorus produced was not precisely a history.

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[106] Cf. the remarks of J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, AD 364-425* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 377-88.

[107] In Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 133-34, I suggest that Philostorgius and Olympiodorus may have been personally acquainted.

[108] Thompson, "Olympiodorus of Thebes", p. 52.

[109] Blockley, *Classicizing Historians*, i. 47.

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THE BYZANTINE WORLD HISTORIES OF JOHN MALALAS AND EUSTATHIUS OF EPIPHANIA

According to the current scholarly consensus, the most characteristic example of the Byzantines' view of world history is the so-called *Chronicle* of John Malalas (c.490-after 565). Malalas's work has a well-established reputation for being "popular", even if the exact nature of its popularity is seldom defined. Malalas's language can be called "popular", if by that we mean something more like spoken Greek than written Greek usually was at the time. Certainly Malalas's work has become a popular subject among specialists in Late Antiquity today, and it owes much of that popularity to the assumption that it was also popular among Byzantine readers. Even earlier scholars, who generally disdained Malalas, saw him as the authentic voice of a typical Byzantine – that is, of an ignoramus.

Thus, in 1897 Karl Krumbacher, while describing Malalas's work as amateurish in both method and composition, assumed it was written for the Byzantine masses: "Malalas ist in seiner historiographischen Technik, in seiner Auffassung und Darstellung von einer Grobheit, wie sie bisher in der geschichtlichen Litteratur unerhört war ... Selbst jener feineren Bildung bar, schreibt er ... fur die grosse Masse von Mönchen und Laien". Krumbacher went on to catalogue some of Malalas's "lächlichen Irrtümer" and "Kindlichkeiten"[1]. In 1923, J. B. Bury wrote that Malalas had produced a work with "no sense of proportion" and "many blunders", which "was written down to the level of the masses, and was nicely calculated to give them what would interest them ... It hit the popular taste, was largely used by subsequent writers, was in a later age translated into Slavonic, and was the first of a long series of popular Byzantine chronicles"[2]. As recently as 1969, Robert Browning described Malalas's work as "an uncritical compilation" that was

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[1] K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur von Justinian bis zum Ende des oströmischen Reiches (527-1453)*, 2nd ed. (*Handbuch der klassischen Altertums-Wissenschaft* IX, Munich, 1897), i. 326-8; I retain the unreformed German spelling. An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Harvard University Early Slavic Seminar.

[2] J. B. Bury, *A History of the Later Roman Empire from the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian (AD 395 to AD 565)*, 2nd ed. (London, 1923), ii. 435.

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"full of absurd errors" but was also "immensely popular in the Byzantine world and was used directly or indirectly by all succeeding writers of universal history"[3].

By 1990, Elizabeth Jeffreys, who also endorsed the opinion that Malalas's work was "popular" among the Byzantines, interpreted its popularity more favorably: "The chronicle of John Malalas was taken seriously in the sixth century when it first appeared, and it subsequently had a profound impact on the tradition of chronographical writing in Greek, Syriac, and Slavonic"[4]. Similarly, Michael Maas recently declared Malalas's work to be "far more representative of widely held beliefs in the sixth century than the classicizing history of Procopius"[5]. Claudia Rapp added: "The formal histories by Procopius and Agathias . . . were not the works that enjoyed the greatest popularity among contemporaries and later generations. That merit fell to", among just three others, "Malalas' *Chronicle*" which "provided ... infotainment"[6]. Such is the new consensus, which as far as the facts go is the old consensus, though "popularity" has now become a "merit", a view not shared by earlier scholars. Without adducing much in the way of evidence or arguments, everyone seems to agree that Malalas was at the top of the Byzantine best-seller list[7].

Of course, there was no Byzantine best-seller list. The Byzantines did

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[3] R. Browning, in *The Penguin Companion to Classical, Oriental, and African Literature*, ed. D. M. Lang and D. R. Dudley (Harmondsworth, 1969), p. 199.

[4] *Studies in John Malalas*, ed. E. Jeffreys (Sydney, 1990), p. ix.

[5] M. Maas, "Roman Questions, Byzantine Answers: Contours of the Age of Justinian", in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. M. Maas (Cambridge, 2004), p. 18.

[6] C. Rapp, "Literary Culture under Justinian", in *Cambridge Companion*, ed. Maas, p. 394. The other works that Rapp thinks were more popular than the histories of Procopius and Agathias were Agathias's poetic *Cycle, Agapetus's Mirror of Princes*, and Romanus the Melode's hymns; on these, see n. 15 below.

[7] A partial exception is I. Ševčenko, "The Search for the Past in Byzantium around the Year 800", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, xlvi (1992), 283, who puts his apparent opinion into the mouth of the ninth-century historian George Syncellus: "'Why is it that Malalas, whose culture, let alone scholarship, I do not wish to discuss because I am a saintly man, and who in essence is represented by a single Greek manuscript containing a summary of his work and one partly preserved garbled Slavonic translation – why is it that Malalas is the subject of so much attention by you modern Byzantinists?'".

have a book trade, which sometimes we can barely glimpse[8]. For example, Agathias mentions the bookshops located opposite the main law courts at Constantinople, where half-educated drunkards sat chattering about theology and philosophy without understanding them[9]. Was this, then, the Byzantine reading public, who annoyed Agathias by buying Malalas's history instead of the history by Procopius that Agathias was continuing? If so, was Procopius fantasizing when he wrote that, two years after he had produced Books I-VII of his history, they had spread "throughout the Roman Empire"[10]? Procopius claims that this wide diffusion prevented him from updating his history's separate sections, as he would have preferred, and forced him to write Book VIII as a supplement, which readers who already had the other books could add to their set. At least Procopius seems to have thought his readers would find such a claim credible.

We have no good reason to doubt that some sixth-century booksellers in Constantinople communicated with booksellers in other large Byzantine cities like Antioch and Alexandria, had copies of books made and shipped on request, and sometimes mentioned such sales to authors. Presumably, private individuals and institutions also made or commissioned copies of books that they had borrowed from other people or institutions. How much the Byzantine book trade declined during the general decline in learning and prosperity of the seventh and eighth centuries, or recovered during the general recovery of learning and prosperity of the ninth century and later, is hard to say. In any case, we may legitimately ask which books were most widely copied, and as copying and parchment were expensive, we can assume that most books that were copied were read, probably by a number of readers.

If we had a comprehensive database of literary allusions in Byzantine literature (as someday we may), we could count the references in other authors to Procopius, Agathias, and Malalas. My own guess is that we would

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[8] N. G. Wilson, "Books and Readers in Byzantium", in *Byzantine Books and Bookmen: A Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium* (Washington, 1975), pp. 1-15, probably understates the importance of the Byzantine book trade in the sixth century, though the evidence is admittedly scanty.

[9] Agathias, *Histories*, ed. R. Keydell (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, Berlin, 1967), ii. 29-7. Given the high price of books (cf. Wilson, "Books", pp. 1-4), these booksellers surely had not just stalls but shops, with enough space for their clients to sit down in order to examine and discuss their expensive wares.

[10] Procopius, *Wars*, ed. J. Haury and G. Wirth, rev. ed., 4 vols. (Munich, 2001), viii. 1. 1. For the dates, see W. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (New York, 2007), pp. 189-90.

find more references to Procopius and Agathias than to Malalas. The *Name-Finder* of Hesychius of Miletus, a literary dictionary finished around 582, apparently included Procopius and Agathias but not Malalas; at least, the entries from Hesychius that appear in the *Suda*, a tenth-century encyclopedia, include Procopius and Agathias but omit Malalas[11]. The ninth-century *Bibliotheca* of Photius, a description of some 386 books that represents most of the reading of a well-read Byzantine scholar, includes Procopius but not Agathias or Malalas[12]. The *Excerpts* made for the scholar-emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (reigned 913-59) include all three historians; but the Constantinian *Excerpts* drew on a number of texts that are lost today and must have been rare even in the tenth century; some of them may only have been preserved in the imperial library[13]. Nonetheless, even if many Byzantine *writers* were snobs like Krumbacher, Bury, and Browning, we might still imagine that most Byzantine *readers* preferred Malalas.

As a rough indicator, we might count the number of manuscripts of each historian that survive today. Let us exclude translations (which Greek readers would not have read) and excerpts such as those made for Constantine VII, but include fragmentary manuscripts, most of which must once have been complete. Obviously, most of the Byzantine manuscripts that originally existed have been lost, and many accidents of preservation have affected their present numbers. Our surviving sample is small; for instance, we have only about ninety-one manuscripts of Thucydides, an author whom any Byzantine with a standard secondary education would have read at school[14]. Thus, minor

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[11] See *Suda*, ed. A. Adler, 5 vols. (*Lexicographi Graeci*, Leipzig, 1928-38), A 112 (Agathias) and Π 2479 (Procopius). On Hesychius and his *Name-Finder*, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 270-8.

[12] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, ed. R. Henry, 9 vols. (Paris, 1959-91), "codex" 63. On the *Bibliotheca* in general, see W. Treadgold, *The Nature of the Bibliotheca of Photius* (Washington, 1980), esp. pp. 5, 62, 79-80.

[13] On the *Excerpts* of Constantine VII, see esp. P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanism byzantin: Notes et remarques sur l'enseignement et culture à byzance des origines au Xe siècle* (Paris, 1971), pp. 280-8, who includes a list of the authors excerpted; among them are such rarities as Peter the Patrician, Priscus of Panium, Malchus of Philadelphia, Dexippus, Eunapius of Sardis, and Nicholas of Damascus.

[14] See A. Dain, "Liste des manuscrits de Thucydide", *Revue des Études Grecques*, xlvi (1933), 20-8 and 476 (I omit the three manuscripts of the Constantinian *Excerpts* but include the four manuscripts lost in the Escorial fire of 1671 and the fragmentary Brussels manuscript added by Dain on p. 476). On Byzantine school texts, see N. G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium* (London, 1983), pp. 18-27 and Treadgold, *Nature*, pp. 6-7.

differences in numbers of manuscripts mean nothing; but major differences may mean something. My count, for what it is worth, is: Procopius's works, eighty-two manuscripts; Agathias's history, thirteen manuscripts; and Malalas's history, three manuscripts, if we count a palimpsest from which Malalas's text has been erased[15].

Not by coincidence, our texts of Procopius and Agathias are in excellent condition, while our text of Malalas is in deplorable shape. Jeffreys observes that the single manuscript that provides almost all of our text of Malalas (the other two manuscripts are scrappy) "has been copied carelessly" and "abbreviated in the later books", as appears from a comparison with the *Excerpts* of Constantine VII and the partly preserved Slavonic translation. Jeffreys suggests as an explanation, "perhaps ... the low language level encouraged inattentive scribal habits"[16]. If so, that inattention seems to undermine Jeffreys's conclusion about how "seriously" the Byzantines took Malalas's work, since the scribe had such a low opinion of it that he copied it carelessly and left much of it out. Whoever erased Malalas's text in the fourteenth century to copy the *Iliad* on the palimpsest cannot have taken Malalas very seriously either[17]. To my knowledge, none of the more

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[15] Cf. *Procopius*, ed. J. Haury and G. Wirth (Munich, 2001), i. xxviii-lii (*Wars*), iii. xv-xx (*Secret History*), and iv. v-viii (*Buildings*, not really a historical work); M. Kalli, *The Manuscript Tradition of Procopius' Gothic Wars: A Reconstruction of Family y in the Light of a Hitherto Unknown Manuscript (Athos, Lavra H-73)* (Leipzig, 2004); *Agathias*, ed. R. Keydell (*Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*, Berlin, 1967), pp. xi-xx; and *Malalas*, ed. H. Thurn (*Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*, Berlin, 2000), pp. 4*-16* (O, PV, and the palimpsest *Fragmenta Tusculana*; the other manuscripts are excerpts or translations). Of the other three works that Rapp in "Literary Culture" thinks were more popular than Procopius's and Agathias's histories, Agathias's *Cycle* and Romanus's hymns are preserved in no independent manuscripts, and survive, only in part, in later anthologies; see A. Cameron, *The Greek Anthology from Meleager to Planudes* (Oxford, 1993), p. 16, and *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica: Cantica Genuina*, ed. P. Maas and C. A. Trypanis (Oxford, 1963), pp. xv-xxviii. The third work, Agapetus's brief *Mirror of Princes*, survives in nearly a hundred manuscripts (no one seems to know quite how many), but the great majority are post-Byzantine, and few Byzantine authors show knowledge of Agapetus; see I. Ševčenko, "Agapetus East and West: The Fate of a Byzantine 'Mirror of Princes'", *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes*, xvi (1978), 3-44, esp. 4 and 7-9, and *Agapetos Diakonos, Der Furstenspiegel für Kaiser Iustinianos*, ed. R. Reidinger (Athens, 1995), esp. pp. 22-3, who uses 22 manuscripts.

[16] E. Jeffreys, "Malalas in Greek", in *Studies*, ed. Jeffreys, p. 246.

[17] See Thurn, *Malalas*, p. 10*.

numerous manuscripts of Procopius or Agathias has been erased or abbreviated in such a way.

One might attach some significance to the fact that the two manuscripts of Malalas that have not been erased have been dated to the tenth and twelfth centuries, and the palimpsest to the later sixth century, while the earliest of the eighty-two manuscripts of Procopius has been dated to the thirteenth century. Yet the evidence that Procopius was more popular than Malalas after 1200 (eighty-two manuscripts to none) is much stronger than the evidence that Malalas was more popular than Procopius before 1200 (three manuscripts to none). In fact, most surviving Byzantine secular manuscripts, even those of authors who formed the basis of the school curriculum, date from after 1204, when a great many books perished in fires at Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade[18].

It might possibly be argued that the fires destroyed more of the books of the Byzantine elite, if they tended to live in the capital and to read Procopius, than of the books of ordinary people, if they tended to live in the provinces and to read Malalas. Yet such tendencies are far from clear, because some of the elite were aristocrats and bishops who lived in the provinces, and many of the few people of lower rank who had the literary interests and money to buy books were officials, clerics, and merchants living in Constantinople. The safest conclusion is simply that the fraction of our secular manuscripts that survives from before 1204 is too small to be a reliable indicator. Our manuscript tradition of Procopius is complex enough that it must depend on many lost copies from earlier than 1204, while our two manuscripts of Malalas, apart from the palimpsest, appear to be closely related[19]. Our earliest manuscript of Agathias dates from around 1000.

One might still argue that Malalas, even if not popular among Byzantine readers, at least tried to be a popularizer, unlike Procopius or Agathias. Yet even this is dubious. Malalas seems to be trying (though failing) to write literary *Koinē* Greek, like his predecessors Polybius, Diodorus,

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[18] Cf. A. Dain, *Les manuscrits*, new ed. (Paris, 1964), pp. 146-54, and L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1974), p. 63. Just six of our ninety-one manuscripts of Thucydides date from before 1200 (see Dain, "Liste").

[19] On the archetype of our two main manuscripts of Malalas, see Jeffreys, "Malalas in Greek", pp. 245-7 (esp. p. 247: "The passages from Malalas [in manuscript PV] ... are very close to the text preserved in [manuscript] Ba [Thurn's O], as far as can be judged from the brief overlapping portions of Book II").

Eusebius, and Zosimus[20]. Like Procopius, Malalas called himself a "rhetor", which ordinarily meant a man of learning. ("Malalas" means "rhetor" in Syriac). Though Procopius and Agathias seldom cite literary sources, Malalas inserts 219 citations of seventy-five different writers. These include major historians like Herodotus and Diodorus, obscure historians like Charax of Pergamum and Castor of Rhodes, poets like Archilochus and Euripides, and Latin authors like Virgil and Livy[21]. Malalas also includes detailed discussions of chronology. True, he makes many serious mistakes, like calling Cicero and Sallust "the most learned Roman poets"[22]; but that just makes him a bad historian, not a popularizing one.

Finally, one might argue that, even if Malalas was seldom read and little respected by any Byzantines, later Byzantine chroniclers, while scarcely ever mentioning him, were greatly influenced by him. Yet even this conclusion largely depends on accepting an old argument that Malalas was the main source of John of Antioch, whose history survives in substantial fragments and was used by various later authors. As the sections of John of Antioch's text that parallel Malalas's history omit all of Malalas's worst historical errors and are written in the erudite Attic dialect, John could only have used Malalas's text if he also rewrote Malalas's "popular" Greek in Attic and used more accurate sources to correct Malalas's mistakes. Yet no one has ever explained why John would have bothered to use Malalas's work if he had sources he realized were more accurate, or why John, if he was able to rewrite Malalas's work in Attic, then composed his own continuation of it in more "popular" Greek. These are problems to which I shall return later in this

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[20] Cf. R. Browning, *Byzantine and Modern Greek*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1983), p. 5, who remarks of texts like Malalas's: "None of these works is in any sense a reproduction of contemporary spoken Greek; they are mixtures of living speech and dead tradition, like all medieval Greek texts. One must in each case try to determine the proportions of the mixture, and also the reason for the adoption of this particular literary form: it may be important to know whether we are dealing with an incompetent attempt to write purist Greek or with the work of a man of learning who tries to make concessions to uneducated readers or hearers". Malalas's history is probably an example of the former, and certainly not of the latter.

[21] Here I rely upon the catalogue of Malalas's citations in E. Jeffreys, "Malalas' Sources", in *Studies*, ed. Jeffreys, pp. 172-96.

[22] Malalas viii. 32 (Jeffreys 33). Malalas is cited according to the book and chapter numbers of Thurn's edition, though when Thurn's chapter numbers differ from those of E. Jeffreys et al., *The Chronicle of John Malalas: A Translation* (Melbourne, 1986), the chapter numbers of Jeffreys's translation are supplied in parentheses.

article.

This article takes a fresh look at Malalas's strange history, which presents problems that have never been fully solved or even fully addressed. To begin with, we should avoid assuming that Malalas wrote for the Byzantine masses, who, being illiterate, never read Malalas or anybody else[23]. The article argues that Malalas was a fraud, who claimed to have consulted many sources, some of which he fabricated in order to deceive his readers, though he actually paraphrased a single source, to which he added only invented misinformation and a final account of his own times. It further argues that Malalas's source was his older contemporary Eustathius of Epiphania, who, far from being a "popular" historian in any sense of the word, was one of the most learned and sophisticated historians Byzantium ever produced. Finally, it argues that about half of Eustathius's text survives today in almost unaltered form under the name of John of Antioch, who, like Malalas, tried to claim Eustathius's erudition for himself.

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As usual with pre-modern authors, nearly all we know about Malalas comes from his own work. Since even there he hardly ever mentions himself, we can only guess where he was and what he was doing from what he says about events during his lifetime. Such guesswork can obviously go astray, but it can also produce an outline of his biography that is likely to be more or less correct. Malalas implies that he was born at Antioch and had oral sources for events as early as the time of the Emperor Zeno, who reigned from 474 to 491. Malalas cannot have been born much earlier than 491, because he evidently stopped writing seventy-four years after that, in 565. Since he seems to show personal knowledge of events at Antioch as early as 507, his birth is usually—and reasonably—dated around 490[24].

The part of the history that covers Malalas's lifetime is particularly disjointed, and shows five abrupt shifts in focus that seem to reflect changes

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[23] No scholar has suggested that most Byzantines were literate at any date, though literacy was more widespread in Byzantium than in contemporary western Europe. The standard discussions are R. Browning: "Literacy in the Byzantine World", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, iv (1978), 39-54, and "Further Reflections on Byzantine Literacy", in *To Hellēnikon: Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr.* (New Rochelle, 1993), i. 69-84.

[24] Cf. Malalas xvii. 5-6 (6 referring to Anastasius's third consulship in 507 as "in the same year" as the events of the preceding chapter).

in his career. Sections almost entirely about Antioch alternate with sections almost entirely about Constantinople, with hardly any chronological overlapping. Malalas seems simply to have written down whatever came to his attention wherever he was living, without bothering to inquire what had happened during his absences. Before 527, Malalas shows so much interest in the office of the Count of the East at Antioch that he is usually assumed to have been on the count's staff of six hundred or so bureaucrats[25]. Yet Malalas also shows detailed if intermittent knowledge of events and conditions at Constantinople, and claims to have visited Thessalonica[26].

To judge from his coverage of events, Malalas was in Antioch until about 512, in Constantinople from about 512 to 519, back in Antioch from about 519 to 522, in Constantinople again in 522 and 523, in Antioch again from 523 to 527, and after that in Constantinople[27]. He appears to have been in Constantinople during the magistracies of two fellow Syrians who figure prominently in his narrative and who probably employed him in the capital: the Praetorian Prefect Marinus and the City Prefect Theodotus (himself a former Count of the East)[28]. Malalas seems to have moved permanently to

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[25] See B. Croke, "Malalas, the Man and His Work", in *Studies*, ed. Jeffreys, pp. 10-11; cf. A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 280-1, 373-4, 592-3.

[26] Malalas vii. 12 (Thessalonica; but cf. n. 93 below); cf. Croke, "Malalas", pp. 4-6.

[27] Malalas xvii. 7 (a giantess at Antioch, apparently after Paul II became patriarch in summer 519 as in xvii. 6), xvii. 13 (the Olympic Games at Antioch), xvii. 14 (a fire at Antioch the same year), and xvii. 15 (an earthquake at Anazarbus and flood at Edessa the next year). Though Theophanes Confessor, *Chronicle*, ed. C. de Boor, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1883-5), AM 6017 and 6018, dates the earthquake at Anazarbus and the flood at Edessa to 524/5 and the fire at Antioch to 525/6, here Theophanes's dates are probably wrong, since his only source for them seems to have been Malalas himself; cf. C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 262-4.

[28] Malalas xvi. 12 (498), xvi. 16 (515), xvi. 19 (512), and xvii. 2 (518, preserved only in the Constantinian *Excerpts*). On Marinus, see A. H. M. Jones et al., *[The] P[rosopography of the] L[ater] R[oman] E[mpire]*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1970-92), ii. Marinus 7; Croke, "Malalas", pp. 6, 11, 16; and Jeffreys, "Malalas' Sources", p. 209. Marinus was still in office in 515, but by April 517 Sergius of Zeugma was prefect and in 518 Justin made Apion prefect; cf. *PLRE*, ii. Sergius 7 and Apion 3 (also mentioned by Malalas xvii. 3). On Theodotus, see Malalas xvii. 12, and cf. *PLRE*, ii. Theodotus 11. Theodotus was probably the successor of Anatolius, who according to Malalas xvii. 14 was prefect in the fourteenth indiction (520/1) while Euphrasius was Patriarch of Antioch (from spring 521). *PLRE*, ii. Anatolius 9,

Constantinople after the great earthquake and fires that devastated Antioch in 526, of which he appears to give an eyewitness account[29].

The church historian Evagrius, who wrote at Antioch around 594, observed that his own copy of Malalas's work concluded with the earthquake of 526 and its aftermath. Probably Evagrius meant that his copy concluded with 527, the end of Book XVII in our text of Malalas[30]; if so, Malalas finished the first version of his history about 527. Probably he either left a copy of Books I-XVII of his history behind in Antioch when he departed for Constantinople, or sent a copy back soon after arriving there.

Next, starting with 528, Malalas shows detailed knowledge of diplomatic reports, and often mentions Hermogenes, who served as master of offices, the empire's senior diplomat, from about 528 to 533. So perhaps around 528 Malalas obtained a post under Hermogenes in the imperial bureaucracy[31]. Meanwhile, Malalas continued to bring his history up to date, seemingly adding information almost as soon as it reached him. He probably produced a second, updated edition of his history in mid-528, because at that point the Slavonic translator says his Greek text of Malalas ended[32]. Evidently

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however, dates Anatolius's prefecture to 525 on the basis of the unreliable chronology of Theophanes (see n. 27 above).

[29] Malalas xvii. 16-19.

[30] Evagrius, *History of the Church*, ed. J. Bidez and L. Parmentier (London, 1898), iv. 5. Though Croke, "Malalas", pp. 17-22, argues that Malalas's first edition ended only with 532, this seems incompatible with what Evagrius says. For Evagrius, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 299-308.

[31] The apparent quotations from diplomatic reports are at Malalas xviii. 6, 15, 44, 53, 56 (note the first-person reference by the Byzantine ambassador, who was evidently Nonnosus; see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 256-8 and n. 101), 61, 68. The references to Hermogenes (described as a "Scythian") are at Malalas xviii. 34, 36, 44, 50, 59 (Jeffreys 60), 65, 68, and 76; cf. *PLRE*, iii. Hermogenes 1. Note that Hermogenes is attested in office first in May 529 and last in January 533, while his successor Tribonian (*PLRE*, iii. Tribonianus 1) is first attested in November 533; since Tribonian was only an honorary master of offices in 528-9, Hermogenes could well have been the immediate successor of Tatian, last attested in office in April 527 (*PLRE*, ii. Tatianus 3). For Malalas's connection with Hermogenes, see also Croke, "Malalas", pp. 11, 19, and Jeffreys, "Malalas' Sources", pp. 209-10. On Malalas as a source for Byzantine diplomacy, cf. R. Scott, "Diplomacy in the Sixth Century: The Evidence of John Malalas", in *Byzantine Diplomacy*, ed. J. Shepard and S. Franklin (Aldershot, 1992), pp. 159-65.

[32] The end of the second edition evidently came after Malalas xviii. 13. Cf. Croke, "Malalas", pp. 19-20, who tries to interpret the statement in the Slavonic translation (and the statement in Evagrius) as referring to an edition ending only in

Malalas prepared yet a third, updated edition of his history in the middle of 533, because there the seventh-century "Paschal Chronicle" stops showing its previously close dependence on Malalas[33].

From the middle of 533 to 565, Malalas's narrative undergoes still another change, becoming less detailed and abandoning most coverage of foreign affairs; perhaps when Hermogenes was replaced as master of offices in 533, Malalas lost his post and his main sources of official information, and consequently stopped writing[34]. Yet this fourth and last section of the history still seems to be by Malalas, because it shows his characteristically careless style. Such a style is unparalleled among contemporary Byzantine historians and is almost unparalleled among contemporary writers; the sole exception is the highly idiosyncratic Cosmas Indicopleustes, whose work in "popular" Greek seems never to have been popular among Byzantine readers[35].

Though our only manuscript of this part of Malalas's work breaks off

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532, arguing that "lengthy works such as Malalas' chronicle were not usually reproduced in short intervals in an updated form", since "the practice was to update the original work some years later". While this is more or less true as a generalization, there are important exceptions, like Eusebius's *History of the Church* (see n. 38 below).

[33] The break seems to have come at Malalas xviii. 78. Malalas xviii. 77 shows the last clear parallel with the *Paschal Chronicle*, ed. L. Dindorf, 2 vols. (*Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, Bonn, 1832), i. 629, where it refers to the earthquake of 533; but given that the anonymous chronicler directly quotes Justinian's religious edict of 533, he had no need to use the much less detailed account in Malalas xviii. 78. As before, Croke, "Malalas", pp. 17-21, argues for just two editions, suggesting that an appropriate place for the conclusion of the first edition would have been the Endless Peace of 532 at xviii. 76. This suggestion carries little weight for an author who composed as carelessly as Malalas, and it ignores the clear parallel between the "Paschal Chronicle" and Malalas xviii. 77. On the "Paschal Chronicle" (the title is modern and not appropriate), see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 340-8.

[34] Though Hermogenes was briefly reappointed master of offices in 535 (*PLRE*, iii. Hermogenes 1), Malalas seems not to have returned to serve under him.

[35] See W. Wolska-Conus, *Cosmas Indicopleustès, Topographie Chrétienne: Introduction, texte critique, illustration, traduction et notes*, 3 vols. (*Sources Chrétiennes* nos. 141, 159, and 197, Paris, 1968-73), esp. i. 236-43 on Cosmas's style. Rapp, "Literary Culture", p. 394, who, while assuming (probably incorrectly) that Malalas was widely read, also observes (probably correctly) that "Cosmas' work met with little or no interest among contemporaries or later audiences". It does, however, appear in Photius, *Bibliotheca*, "codex" 36, with a withering judgment on its style and accuracy.

in mid-sentence in mid-563, the selections from Malalas in the *Excerpts* made for Constantine VII continue to 565. Because Malalas accurately records the length of Justinian's reign up to the emperor's death in November 565, that presumably marked the end of the fourth and final edition of Malalas's history[36]. Apparently, at Justinian's death, the elderly Malalas decided to bring his history up to date one last time[37]. The preparation of such frequent editions of a single work is unusual in Byzantine histories but not unprecedented: Eusebius of Caesarea produced at least five editions of his *History of the Church* between 295 and 326[38]. Malalas probably died not very long after 565.

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Malalas, in his title, did not actually use the word "chronicle", which was what unpretentious Byzantine historians usually called their works and most modern scholars have called Malalas's. His own title, though now corrupted in the single Greek manuscript that supplies it, must have been something like *General [History] by John Malalas, Originally from the Great City of Antioch of the Syrians, from the Time of the Creation of the World*[39].

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[36] On the ending date of Malalas's history, see Croke, "Malalas", pp. 21-5. For the length of Justinian's reign, see Malalas xviii. 1 (38 years, 7 months, 13 days), and note that the Slavonic translation omits this passage, while the *Paschal Chronicle*, p. 617 (on the year 527) gives a different and incorrect length for the reign (38 years, 11 months); the logical deduction is that Malalas inserted the length of Justinian's reign in an edition of his work prepared later than the editions used by the Slavonic translator and the redactor of the *Paschal Chronicle*, who took the length of the reign from another source.

[37] For a different view of Malalas's changing perspective, see R. Scott, "Writing the Reign of Justinian: Malalas versus Theophanes", in *The Sixth Century: End or Beginning?*, ed. P. Allen and E. Jeffreys (Brisbane, 1996), pp. 20-34, esp. pp. 24-8 and 34, who argues that Malalas represents typical "sixth-century attitudes" towards events.

[38] See Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 39 and n. 40, and cf. T. Barnes, "The Editions of Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History", *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, xxi (1980), 191-201.

[39] Following the Slavonic translation, we should probably read Ἐνκύκλιον Ἰωάννου <Μαλάλα> καταγομένου ἐκ τῶν Συρίων πόλεως Ἀντιοχέως τῆς μεγάλης (ἐκ τῶν χρονῶν Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ μεγάλου MS.) ἐκ χρονῶν κτίσεως κόσμου. Cf. the slightly different reconstructions of E. Bikerman, "Les Maccabees de Malalas", *Byzantion*, xxi (1951), 70 n.4, and of E. Jeffreys, "The Chronicle of John Malalas,

Though most historians tried to write elegant prefaces professing their inability to do their subject justice, John's preface manages to be brief and awkward without being humble:

> After abridging some things from the Hebrew Scriptures of Moses and the historians Africanus, Eusebius Pamphili, Pausanias, Didymus, Theophilus, Clement, Diodorus, Domninus, Eustathius, and many other studious historians, poets, and scholars, I thought it right to present with all truthfulness some of the events in the times of the emperors until the events of my own times that came to my ears – I mean from Adam to the emperor Zeno, and the emperors who succeeded him[40]. The men of later times [than mine] should also record the future to win fame. Thus most historians have reported the report of the world to be as follows.

Here I shall describe Malalas's text briefly, including a few highlights. Malalas begins his Book I with the Creation, which he dates six thousand years before Christ's resurrection. Along with Old Testament history, Malalas describes such rulers of Assyria as Cronus, his wife Semiramis, and their son Zeus. Cronus and Zeus were mortal kings, named after the planets we now call Saturn and Jupiter, and were worshipped as gods only after they died. Zeus had a son named Aphrus, who ruled over "Libya" (Malalas fails to make the obvious connection between "Aphrus" and "Africa"). Aphrus became the father of Aphrodite, a female philosopher who was, again, named after a planet (Venus).

Book II continues from the reign of Hephaestus's son and successor, Helios, to the introduction of idolatry by Abraham's father, Terah. This was the time when King Pentheus of Thebes was defeated in battle and beheaded by his cousin Dionysus. Book III opens with Abraham's departure for Mesopotamia and ends with the Jews' exodus from Egypt; during this period, Hesiod invented the Greek alphabet. Book IV begins with the death of

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Book I: A Commentary", in Allen and Jeffreys, *Sixth Century*, pp. 53-4. All the titles in the archetype of our two main manuscripts seem to have been difficult for copyists to read, perhaps because they were written in colored ink that had faded or flaked; the titles of Books VI, XVII, and XVIII also seem to be corrupt (see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 242 n. 68 and 245 nn. 76, 77) and the titles of Books II and XVI are missing altogether.

[40] In line 8 of the preface, instead of Kambylis's conjecture ἐκθέσαι σοι or the manuscript's ἐκθέσεσι, read ἐκθέσθαι (as suggested by Thurn in his apparatus).

Inachus, the first king of Argos, and ends with David's accession as king of Israel; in this period, the Thracian poet Orpheus wrote that a divine trinity had created the world.

The particularly long Book V dates the Trojan War to David's reign and covers the war in detail, giving physical descriptions of its leading figures with such features as Helen's beautiful breasts, Achilles' sparse beard, and Aeneas's receding hairline[41]. The book concludes with the reign of King Joachim of Judah. Book VI begins with the Jews' Babylonian captivity, then reverts to Aeneas's journey to Italy after the fall of Troy, some six centuries earlier, and traces Aeneas's dynasty until it founded Rome. Book VII describes the city's founding by "Romus" (not Romulus), the rule of subsequent Roman kings down to Tarquin the Proud, the history of the Roman Republic until Julius Caesar, and the history of Macedon down to Alexander the Great.

Book VIII begins with the conquests of Alexander, whose death is dated to the year 5593 from Adam, or 376 BC. (Alexander actually died in 323 BC[42].) Though the book mentions the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Antigonids of Macedon, most of it deals with the Seleucids of Syria, and especially with Seleucus I's foundation of "Antioch the Great" and other Syrian cities; the book ends with the beginning of Roman rule in Syria. Book IX begins with the First Triumvirate, continues with Caesar's assassination, the Second Triumvirate, and Augustus's victory over Antony, and gives special attention to the visits of Caesar and Augustus to Antioch. The book concludes with the annunciation of Christ's birth.

Book X opens with the birth of Christ, which is assigned a date corresponding to our 2 BC. According to Malalas, Christ's resurrection occurred six thousand years after the Creation, at a date corresponding to our AD 31. The book continues Roman and Christian history until the death of the emperor Nerva in AD 98. Book XI begins with Trajan and ends with the death of the emperor Lucius Verus in 169. Though Malalas records that Verus reigned eight years, which he did from 161 to 169 as the colleague of Marcus Aurelius, Malalas incorrectly places Verus's reign after Marcus's death in 180.

Book XII begins with Commodus's accession (in 180) and prominently records Septimius Severus's visit to Byzantium and his new buildings there. Then our principal manuscript has a gap between the

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[41] Malalas v.1 (Helen), 9 (Achilles), and 10 (Aeneas).

[42] Malalas viii. 4; cf. E. Jeffreys, "Chronological Structures in Malalas' Chronicle", in Jeffreys, *Studies*, pp. 115-16.

accession of Caracalla in 211 and the death of the emperor Aemilianus in 253; but almost all of Malalas's account of this period seems to survive in the Constantinian *Excerpts* and the "Paschal Chronicle", even if his exact text is often hard to establish. As with Verus in Book XI, Malalas fails to notice that several emperors reigned simultaneously, and describes their reigns as if they had followed one another. Book XII ends with the death of Licinius (in 324), which, according to Malalas, preceded Constantine's accession (in 306).

Book XIII begins with Constantine's conversion, which Malalas describes as happening during a war against some nameless "barbarians", since he has mistakenly recorded the death of Constantine's real opponent Maxentius much earlier[43]. The book gives prominence to Constantine's foundation of Constantinople and to Julian's visit to Antioch. Then John becomes badly confused by the contemporaneous eastern and western successions of the dynasties of Valentinian I and Theodosius I. The book ends with Honorius's death in 423 and Theodosius II's accession in 408, which are described as simultaneous events.

Book XIV, which covers the years from 408 to 474 and includes the breakdown of the western Roman Empire, shows some improvement in the accuracy of the narrative, though how much of an improvement is often hard to tell because our other sources are scanty and fragmentary. Book XV covers the reign of Zeno from 474 to 491, more or less accurately. Evidently Malalas felt surer of his chronology by this point, because for the first time since the birth of Christ he mentions the year from Adam, dating Zeno's death in 491 to the year 6458, which by his reckoning was correct[44]. Finally, during Malalas's own lifetime, his narrative, as already noted, shifts back and forth abruptly between Antioch and Constantinople.

Among a great many mistakes, Malalas records that after the emperor Claudius died at age sixty-five, Claudius's "son" Nero, described as "having completely grey hair", reigned thirteen years before being assassinated at age sixty-nine by Galba[45]. Here Malalas misreports both Claudius's age and the length of Nero's reign, not realizing that Nero was merely an adopted son and

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[43] Cf. Malalas xiii. 2 (war with "barbarians") with xii. 47 (death of Maxentius).

[44] At Malalas xv. 16. 95, for ,εϡπγ΄ (5983) read ,ϛυνη΄ (6458) with Michael the Syrian and (almost) the Slavonic translation; cf. Jeffreys, "Chronological Structures", pp. 117-18. Oddly, Thurn prints the obviously altered date in his text, though in his apparatus he describes Michael the Syrian's date as "ex vero Malala"; yet, presumably, the true text of Malalas is what Thurn should have been editing.

[45] Malalas x. 29-30 (Jeffreys 28-9) and 40-1.

committed suicide at age thirty; the reference to Nero's grey hair shows that his dying at "sixty-nine" cannot be a later copyist's error: Malalas never notices that his data indicate Nero was born when his father was only nine years old.

Later, Malalas becomes confused whenever more than one emperor reigned at the same time. He simply adds together the reigns of the various emperors of the tetrarchy from 284 to 337, turning fifty-three years into ninety-five. Yet if we overlook his mistake that the tetrarchs reigned not as colleagues but one after another, the lengths Malalas gives for their reigns are almost all correct. He even seems to preserve correct information that is otherwise unrecorded about the tetrarchs' lifespans, from which we can deduce their birthdates[46]. In general, Malalas gives an impression of having made a careless and obtuse summary of detailed and reliable source material.

When Malalas came to prepare the second edition of his history in 528, he finally noticed his mistake in counting overlapping reigns as if they had come one after another. Perhaps a reader who knew some history or could do arithmetic pointed it out. Malalas's explanation is particularly awkward: "One must not count the years of the old emperors according to the previously mentioned number [of years] of their reigns, because two [emperors] could also reign together ... Thus the chronicler has [only] the responsibility of writing the number of years when each emperor reigned from the time that he was proclaimed emperor. Thus those who read chronicles ought to pay attention to the number of the years that elapsed and not only to the [lengths of] reign of those [emperors] previously mentioned"[47]. Yet even after Malalas

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[46] Malalas xii. 37 (Diocletian reigned twenty years nine months [actually twenty years five months]), 45 (after Diocletian's abdication, Maximian reigned nineteen years [actually nineteen years as Augustus]), 47 (after Maximian's abdication, "Maxentius Galerius" reigned three years and was murdered at Rome [actually Maxentius reigned six years at Rome and Galerius reigned six years as Augustus, never at Rome]), 48 (after Maxentius, Constantius I reigned thirteen years [actually thirteen years as both Caesar and Augustus]), and 49-50 (after Constantius, "Maximus Licinianus" was proclaimed in the East and reigned seven years before dying at Rome [actually Maximin was proclaimed in the East and reigned eight years, never at Rome, Licinius reigned sixteen years, never at Rome, and Maxentius reigned six years at Rome]), and xiii. 1 (after "Maximus Licinius", Constantine reigned thirty-two years [actually thirty-one years]). See T. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), pp. 3-8 for the correct lengths of these reigns and for the ages Malalas reports for the emperors at their deaths (but see also n. 97 below).

[47] Malalas xviii. 8.

recognized that he had made this serious and systematic error (he never implies that his sources misled him), he made no attempt to correct his text. He merely told his readers to sort things out for themselves.

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Where did Malalas find his material? For events during his lifetime, as he implies in his preface, he presumably drew on his own experiences and those of his acquaintances. For earlier events, he names those seventy-five written sources. Of course, just as modern scholars can cite lost works from quotations in later writers, Malalas need not have consulted all these sources directly, even though he claims in his preface to have consulted many of them. In fact, most of his citations seem much too vague and inaccurate to have come from the original texts.

Jeffreys, in a recent study of Malalas's sources that combines the findings of earlier scholars with her own re-examination of the evidence, suggests that, of the texts Malalas cites, he consulted thirteen directly, and knew the other sixty-two only through intermediaries. Jeffreys concludes that Malalas relied mainly on three sources, all of them known today only from him: "Domninus", "Timotheus", and "Nestorianus". Malalas's ten citations of Domninus imply that Domninus wrote a general history with a special interest in Antioch from mythical times until 305 at the earliest. Malalas's seven citations of Timotheus imply that Timotheus wrote another general history from mythical times until at least 528; Malalas's two citations of Nestorianus imply that Nestorianus wrote yet another general history from quite early times until 474[48].

Of the other ten sources that Jeffreys thinks Malalas consulted directly, six are also known today from Malalas alone. Another three sources—Eustathius of Epiphania, Charax of Pergamum, and Priscus of Panium—are known from other writers but are lost today; yet since Evagrius informs us that both Charax and Priscus were summarized by Eustathius, Malalas could have known about them from Eustathius. The only source

[48] See Jeffreys, "Malalas' Sources", esp. pp. 216 (conclusion), 178-9 (Domninus), 194-5 (Timotheus), 187 (Nestorianus), and 196-7 (where her lists of both direct and indirect sources omit Anthius, the Scriptures, Hermes Trismegistus, Magnus of Carrhae, and Moses, though Jeffreys suggests on pp. 173, 182, 182-3, 186, and 187 that Malalas knew these only indirectly; while she lists "Sisyphos/Diktys" as a source Malalas knew directly, she suggests on pp. 176-7 that he knew Dictys only through Sisyphus).

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Jeffreys thinks Malalas used directly that still survives is the Latin chronicle of Eutropius; Malalas, however, seems not to have used the surviving Greek translation of Eutropius, and his attempts to quote Latin show that he lacked a working knowledge of the language. His two references to Eutropius, though not erroneous, are so vague that they, too, could easily be indirect[49].

Among the many sources that Jeffreys assumes Malalas did not consult directly, Malalas cites thirteen authors whom we know only from him. He claims that two, "Clement" and "Theophilus", agreed with the equally unattested Timotheus that Justinian's second consulship in 528 occurred 6,497 years after the Creation. Malalas's eight citations of "Clement" imply that Clement, like Timotheus, wrote a general history from mythical times until at least 528, and twelve citations of "Theophilus" imply that Theophilus, like Timotheus and Clement, wrote yet another general history from mythical times until at least 528. Malalas's three citations of another otherwise unknown author, "Bottius", suggest that Bottius wrote still another general history from mythical times until at least 96[50].

In all, Malalas implies that he consulted no fewer than seven historians who combined pagan and Christian material from the earliest times well into the Christian era. These historians are Domninus, Timotheus, Nestorianus, Clement, Theophilus, and Bottius, all otherwise unknown, and Eustathius of Epiphania, whose history is lost but otherwise known. With the possible exception of Bottius, all of these would date from the early Byzantine period. So, if we take Malalas on trust, six major universal histories have disappeared without a trace, except for Malalas's citations of them.

Another remarkable fact is that three of these lost universal historians – Timotheus, Clement, and Theophilus – seem still to have been writing in 528. This also appears to have been the date of the second edition of Malalas's history, which must have included Malalas's references to Timotheus,

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[49] See Jeffreys, "Malalas' Sources", pp. 174 (Bassus), 175 (Brunichius), 181 (Eutychianus), 190 (Philostratus), 192-3 (Sisyphus), 195-6 (Timotheus the Persian Courier), 180 (Eustathius), 175 (Charax), 191 (Priscus), and 181 (Eutropius). Cf. Malalas viii. 27 (Jeffreys 28) with Eutropius 4.6-7, and Malalas xiii. 25 with Eutropius 10. 16. For Malalas's attempts to quote Latin, see n. 66 below.

[50] See Jeffreys, "Malalas' Sources", pp. 175-6 (Clement), 194 (Theophilus), and 174 (Bottius). For the other unattested sources that she conjectures Malalas knew indirectly if at all, see pp. 173 (Anthius), 174 (Auleas), 181 (Eutychianus), 182 (Fortunus), 186-7 (Membronius of Babylon), 187-8 (Ninus), 189 (Pergamus of Pamphylia and Phidalius of Corinth), 190 (Philostratus), and 193 (Sotates). On Theophilus and Clement, cf. Croke, "Malalas", p. 30.

Clement, and Theophilus, because they appear in the Slavonic translation made from that edition. Malalas claims that all three historians agreed with him on an unusual date of the Creation that several modern scholars attribute to Eustathius, although Malalas never cites Eustathius as a source for it[51].

Still another oddity is that of the seventy-five sources Malalas names, a total of twenty-two, or almost one-third, are otherwise unknown, including nine whom Malalas supposedly consulted directly and all three whom he supposedly consulted most. Of course, many ancient writers mention lost and otherwise unattested texts; but few if any authors mention as many as twenty-two such texts, as Malalas does, citing a number of them repeatedly for significant information. If Malalas really was the only writer to unearth all these rare works, he was an uncommonly conscientious scholar; yet many other features of his history show that he was nothing of the sort.

For one thing, almost all Malalas's citations that can be checked against existing texts are inexact, and most of them are at least partly wrong. Their vagueness and inaccuracy are Jeffreys's grounds for assuming that nearly all of them are indirect references. Yet a careful writer who cites another careful writer should be able to make most of his references specific and accurate, even if he knows them only second-hand. Practically all earlier Greek historians known to us were far more accurate than Malalas, and most of the errors in his history seem to be cases not of misremembering but of misunderstanding; despite all his mistakes, Malalas usually stays closer to recognizable facts than he could have done if he had tried to write such a long and detailed work from memory. Though in theory all his faulty references could be blamed on his lost sources, that would force us to postulate many bad historians instead of one, and would still imply that Malalas preferred bad sources to Eustathius, whose competence is affirmed by the competent historian Evagrius.

In fact, in reassessing Malalas's sources, Jeffreys concludes that some of Malalas's references to "Clement" are "'inventions' by Malalas". She observes that the name of the alleged historian Bottius "is suspiciously close to the cult name Zeus Bottios". Among other unknown historians cited by Malalas, she suggests that "Malalas himself inserted" his "extremely dubious" reference to "Eutychianus"; that "Membronius of Babylon" is "a garbled and fictitious name"; and that Philostratus "may be another fictitious

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[51] Malalas xviii. 8. Cf. Croke, "Byzantine Chronicle Writing 1: The Early Development of Byzantine Chronicles", in *Studies*, ed. Jeffreys, pp. 27-38, esp. p. 35.

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author, perhaps fabricated by Malalas to lend authenticity to his narrative"[52]. She therefore implies that Malalas falsified at least five of the sources he cites.

While repeatedly citing the otherwise unknown universal histories of Theophilus, Clement, Timotheus, Domninus, and Nestorianus, Malalas refers only twice to the well-attested universal history of Eustathius of Epiphania. The first reference is just to Eustathius's name, cited last in the list of sources in Malalas's preface. The second reference, to the Persian siege of Amida in 503, says only: "about this battle the most learned chronographer Eustathius has written; and he suddenly died, without having composed his exposition to the end"[53]. Despite referring so seldom to Eustathius, Malalas claims to have known Eustathius's text, which covered all the same ground as Malalas until 503, when he began to draw on his own experience. Is this merely a coincidence?

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We should take a closer look at the mysterious Eustathius of Epiphania. According to the *Suda*, whose source was probably the sixth-century dictionary of Hesychius, Eustathius's history was modestly entitled *Chronological Epitome*. Yet, according to Evagrius, it filled two substantial volumes, the first volume covering events from Adam to the fall of Troy, and the second volume beginning with Aeneas and breaking off after recounting the Persian capture of Amida in 503. Hesychius evidently found just Eustathius's second volume, which contained nine books[54]. Malalas says that Eustathius died suddenly after writing his description of the fall of Amida in 503, but had meant to continue beyond that point.

Although Evagrius records that Eustathius died at the time of the fall of Amida, here Evagrius seems to have misunderstood Malalas, who was evidently his source[55]. For one thing, Zosimus's history, which according to

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[52] Jeffreys, "Malalas' Sources", pp. 175-6 (Clement), 174 (Bottius), 181 (Eutychianus), 186-7 (Membronius of Babylon), and 190 (Philostratus). [Nonetheless, I have recently learned from Benjamin Garstad (in an article on Malalas and Euhemerus that he kindly sent me in draft) that "Bottius" is attested (as Bruttius or Brettius) in the chronicles of Eusebius and Jerome; cf. Malalas X.48 with Jerome, *Chronicle* 96[e] (and the apparatus of Rudolf Helm's edition). This is therefore a genuine source, presumably consulted by Eustathius.]

[53] Malalas xvi. 9.

[54] Cf. Evagrius v. 24 with *Suda* E 3746.

[55] Cf. Evagrius iii. 37 with Malalas xvi. 9.

Evagrius was one of Eustathius's sources, is unlikely to have become familiar to Eustathius just a year or two after Zosimus had left it unfinished in 501 or 502[56]. Moreover, after covering thousands of years since Adam, Eustathius is extremely unlikely to have died just when he came to record the very year in which he was writing; and if he had died then, his narrative would have been substantially complete, though Malalas stresses that it was not. In fact, Byzantine historians who began as far back as the Creation seldom continued their histories up to some arbitrary year in which they happened to be writing, but almost always concluded their narratives with a significant event, usually the end of the preceding imperial reign. If this is what Eustathius had planned to do, he died sometime after the death of the emperor Anastasius in 518. We know that Eustathius was dead before Anastasius's successor, Justin I, died in 527, because Malalas mentioned Eustathius's death in the first edition of his own history, the edition known to Evagrius, which was evidently finished in 527.

Eustathius was a good stylist in the archaizing Attic dialect, because he later won praise for his elegance from Evagrius, another good Atticist. Evagrius also tells us that Eustathius cited "countless" sources, and names twenty-seven of them[57]. Of these twenty-seven sources, Malalas cites ten, including such obscure authors as Charax of Pergamum, Priscus of Panium, Phlegon of Tralles, and Pisander of Laranda[58]. So Eustathius must have done a great deal of research. He could hardly have received his advanced literary education, or consulted the authors Evagrius lists as his sources, in his little home town of Epiphania in Syria (modern Hama). Although Eustathius may have received his secondary schooling in Epiphania, he must then have gone to one of the great cultural centers of the empire, and the most likely choice was nearby Antioch.

Only three later authors mention Eustathius by name: Malalas, Hesychius, and Evagrius. Malalas was born at Antioch and seems to have had personal knowledge about Eustathius's sudden death; Evagrius lived and

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[56] See Evagrius v. 24; A. Cameron, "The Date of Zosimus' New History", *Philologus*, cxiii (1969), 107; F. Paschoud, *Zosime, Histoire nouvelle* I, 2nd ed. (Paris, 2000), pp. xi-xii; and Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 108.

[57] See Evagrius v. 24 and i. 20.

[58] On Eustathius's style, see Evagrius i. 19, iii. 25, and iii. 37, and P. Allen, "An Early Epitomator of Josephus: Eustathius of Epiphaneia", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, lxxxi (1988), 3 and n. 17. For Eustathius's sources, see Evagrius v. 24 and i. 20, and note that Evagrius i. 19, the previous chapter, mentions Eustathius's epitomizing other authors.

wrote at Antioch; and while Hesychius wrote at Constantinople, the entry from his dictionary shows that he had access only to the second volume of Eustathius's history. Moreover, Hesychius attributed the reckoning that Christ's resurrection occurred six thousand years after the Creation to "the Antiochenes", apparently meaning Eustathius and Malalas[59]. Another author who seems to have used Eustathius's history was John of Antioch, also an Antiochene. Evagrius, apart from some passages in which he says Eustathius summarized other writers, cites him mostly as a source for events in the region of Antioch. Therefore, Eustathius probably wrote and died at Antioch.

To judge from Evagrius's citations of him, Eustathius's personal knowledge of events began around 466. Perhaps Eustathius went to Antioch about then to continue his education, and lived there until his death in the 520s. Though he seems to have reached a fairly advanced age, any sudden death at Antioch in the 520s can plausibly be attributed to the catastrophic earthquake of 526. According to Malalas, who apparently lived through it, this disaster killed a quarter of a million people in and around the city, probably including more than half of the urban population[60].

Eustathius was particularly interested in chronology, because Evagrius attributes to him a chronological digression on the occasion of Anastasius's accession as emperor in 491. In this passage, Eustathius computed the numbers of years since Diocletian, Augustus, Alexander the Great, Romulus, and the fall of Troy. If we correct a couple of obvious textual corruptions, Eustathius's numbers seem to have agreed with the chronology recorded by Malalas[61]. Eustathius is probably also the source of the

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[59] Cf. the fragment from Hesychius quoted in *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia*, ed. L. Dindorf (*Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, Bonn, 1831), pp. lii-liii, with Malalas x. 2.

[60] Malalas xvii. 16. This estimate, even though it includes many people who had come from out of town to celebrate Ascension Day and people who died in fires after the earthquake, is probably too high; but the mortality was certainly immense, and included the patriarch of Antioch, Euphrasius (Malalas xvii. 22).

[61] Evagrius iii. 29 notes that Eustathius put Zeno's death (AD 491) 207 years after Diocletian's accession (AD 284, correctly), 532 years and 7 months after Augustus's accession (43 BC, the date adopted by Eusebius' *Chronicle*), 832 years and 7 months after the "reign" (death?) of Alexander the Great (343 BC instead of the actual 323, presumably because of a textual or arithmetical error of 20 years), 1,052 years and 7 months after "the kingdom of the Romans and Romulus" (563 BC, perhaps an error for 753), and 1,686 years and 7 months after the fall of Troy (1197 BC). Malalas includes no dates for Diocletian's accession or for Romulus. Malalas xv. 16 (as corrected from the Slavonic translation) dates Zeno's death to AM 6458,

computation repeated by Malalas and Hesychius that Christ's resurrection occurred exactly six thousand years after the Creation, in the year we should call AD 31.

This date for the Creation differed from the reckoning of earlier Christian historians that Christ had been born 5,500 years after the Creation in our AD 8 or 9, and that the Golden Age would begin six thousand years after the Creation, in our 508 or 509. The passing of 509 without the arrival of a Golden Age may well have been what inspired Eustathius to recalculate the chronology of world history, and perhaps even to compose his whole work. Eustathius maintained that the world was almost five hundred years older than had previously been thought, and that the happy event that occurred six thousand years after the Creation was Christ's resurrection, not the Golden Age[62].

Malalas attributes this distinctive date for the Creation not to Eustathius, but to the otherwise unknown Theophilus, Clement, and Timotheus. Yet it is difficult to believe that they all consulted Eustathius's history just after Eustathius died, probably around 526; that all three then wrote extremely similar world histories extending up to 528, as Malalas indicates; and that Malalas summarized not just Eustathius but all three of them in 527. Malalas would presumably have read all three of their works in preliminary versions at Antioch at least a year before they finished writing, then consulted all three of them in later versions at Constantinople in 528. Was world history truly such a popular subject in the late 520s, and was the book trade—or, at any rate, communication among competing historians—really so lively?

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and Malalas x. 2 dates Christ's birth to AM 5967 in the 42nd year of Augustus, putting Augustus's accession in 43 BC, as in Eustathius. Malalas viii. 4 dates Alexander's death to AM 5593, or 375 BC instead of Eustathius's 343; since the discrepancy is 32 years, Alexander's age at his death, here Malalas seems to have confused Alexander's birthdate with his death date (at Malalas viii. 3. 66, for λς΄ read λβ΄ with Chilmead). Malalas v. 38-9 (Jeffreys 68-9) dates the fall of Troy during the reign of David in AM 4755-95 (1213-1173 BC), compatibly with Eustathius. On Malalas's chronology, see Jeffreys, "Chronological Structures", esp. pp. 114-18.

[62] See Croke, "Byzantine Chronicle Writing", esp. pp. 34-6; R. Scott, "Malalas and His Contemporaries", in *Studies*, ed. Jeffreys, pp. 67-85, esp. p. 69 (on Hesychius); Jeffreys, "Chronological Structures", pp. 111-23; and Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 119, 124-5.

Surely a more plausible explanation is that Malalas directly consulted just one of the seventy-five sources he cites: Eustathius of Epiphania. Malalas knew about most of those sources from Eustathius, but invented at least nine of them. He may have borrowed the name "Clement" from Clement of Alexandria, "Theophilus" from Theophilus of Antioch, "Philostratus" from one of several scholars of that name, "Bottius" from Zeus Bottios, "Domninus" from a philosopher at Athens, and "Timotheus" from a grammarian at Gaza. Any or all of these names may have appeared in Eustathius's history, though if so Malalas omitted authentic references to them[63]. He seems to have expected his readers to find such names vaguely familiar, but not to be sure where to look them up. The names "Nestorianus", meaning "the Nestorian", "Eutychianus", meaning "the Eutychian" (extreme Monophysite), and "Membronius Babylonius", which rhymes, look almost like private jokes on Malalas's part[64]. The reason so many of these authors appear to have written universal histories is simply that Malalas inserted references to them at random into his paraphrase of Eustathius's universal history. Malalas seems to have deliberately set out to conceal the fact that he had made a sloppy summary of a single author, rather than doing the literary research that in his preface he claimed to have done.

Apparently when Eustathius died suddenly at Antioch, perhaps in the earthquake of 526, Malalas, who was living in the city at the time and had known Eustathius personally, gained access to his nearly finished universal history. Malalas realized that Eustathius's history was a work of immense learning and great interest, and decided to exploit its research to advance his own career. He composed in haste, with Eustathius's text before him, apparently dictating to a secretary and scarcely revising at all. Perhaps Malalas wanted to save money on his secretary's bill, or perhaps he had only obtained Eustathius's manuscript on loan for a limited time before he had to return it. (Probably he no longer had access to Eustathius's text in Constantinople when he discovered his mistake about simultaneous imperial reigns, so that by then he was unable to correct his own work.) Rapid dictation may well explain why Malalas's text is riddled with inconsistencies and obscurities, and his style often resembles spoken Greek.

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[63] Cf. n. 108 below for Philostratus as a genuine source of Eustathius [and see n. 52 above for Bottius as a genuine source].

[64] Cf. Jeffreys, "Malalas' Sources", pp. 175-6 (Clement), 194 (Theophilus), 190 (Philostratus), 174 (Bottius), 187 (Nestorianus), 178-9 (Domninus), 194-5 (Timotheus), 181 (Eutychianus), and 186-7 (Membronius). On Membronius, cf. Malalas i. 12 (Μεμβρώνιος Βαβυλώνιος).

Malalas must have recognized that if he simply substituted his name on the title page of Eustathius's manuscript, he could be exposed as a mere copyist rather than a researcher. Malalas's readers would have been especially likely to suspect the truth if they saw from his continuation that he was unable to imitate Eustathius's Attic Greek; and if they found a copy of Eustathius's history under Eustathius's name, they would have known that Malalas had copied it. Malalas therefore set out to paraphrase Eustathius's work in a simpler style, probably trying to write standard *Koinē* Greek. While mentioning Eustathius inconspicuously, Malalas included many of Eustathius's source citations, invented and added some more source citations and details, and drew on his own experience to continue Eustathius's narrative up to 527.

As it was, only a reader who compared the actual texts of Malalas and Eustathius with care could have been certain of what Malalas had done. As Eustathius's work was barely known outside Antioch, such detection was even more unlikely after Malalas moved to Constantinople, where he must have hoped his history would win him favour in the bureaucracy or at court. In the capital, he tried to pose as a scholar, claiming the title of "rhetor" although he had only a mediocre education and the experience of a low-ranking clerk. His eagerness to attract attention seems evident from his preparing three updated editions of his history within the space of about six years.

Yet Malalas seems not to have had much success in Constantinople. After six years as a minor clerk in the bureau of the master of offices, he apparently lost his post and never found a better one. Probably his uncouth and ungrammatical writing style made such a bad impression on educated readers that they gave him little credit for his source citations, some of which they probably suspected were falsified. Readers better educated than Malalas surely noticed some of his worst historical blunders and fabrications, while his incoherent jumble of names and dates in turgid prose would have annoyed almost anyone[65]. Moreover, anyone well educated who read Malalas's work and then met the author in person would soon have realized that Malalas barely understood what he had written. If he hoped to pass himself off as an erudite researcher with a simple style, he probably overestimated himself and underestimated his audience.

Malalas's history therefore appears to be a careless paraphrase of a careful compilation by Eustathius. Most of the names Malalas cites as sources

[65] Cf. n. 35 above for the reaction of Photius (and apparently of others) to the similar style of Cosmas Indicopleustes.

are genuine, if sometimes misunderstood, and presumably come from Eustathius. Eustathius must have consulted not only histories but poetry and even works in Latin, because Malalas could copy from him two slightly mangled Latin verses of Virgil, and probably citations taken directly from Eutropius's Latin chronicle[66]. Unlike Eustathius, Malalas is unlikely to have known more than a few words of Latin; if he had, he should have been able to copy it more accurately. Such ignorance implies that Malalas was a minor official, because senior officials should have known Latin better.

Malalas's chronology was evidently taken from Eustathius, but often miscopied and misused. While the basic historical facts seem also to come from Eustathius, Malalas both muddled them and added inventions of his own. These fictions probably included most of the physical descriptions of emperors, which seldom agree with what is otherwise known or recorded about them, and such absurd details as that the emperor Carus (reigned 282-83) conquered and named the province of Caria and founded the city of Carrhae[67]. The result is a confused mixture of inventions, misunderstandings, and genuine scholarship.

While skimming Eustathius's history, Malalas carelessly copied its numbers for the lengths of imperial reigns and added them together, ignoring all signs that some of them overlapped. Quite possibly the error that Nero died sixty-nine years after his birth occurred because Malalas misread a statement by Eustathius that Nero died sixty-nine years after the birth of Christ, which, according to Eustathius's chronology, would have been correct. Malalas then invented his description of a grey-haired Nero to fit Nero's supposed age[68].

Yet not everything in Malalas's history that may look silly to us should be assigned to Malalas rather than to Eustathius. Malalas's identification of the Olympian gods and goddesses as historical figures evidently goes back to the Hellenistic scholar Euhemerus of Messene, who wrote around 300 BC. Euhemerus's work was epitomized by Diodorus Siculus in Book VI of his *Library of History*, a book that survives today in a few fragments; and Diodorus, cited by Malalas as a source for his euhemerizing, is one of the authors known to have been summarized by Eustathius. Euhemerism was convenient for Christian historians because it

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[66] Cf. Evagrius v. 24 with Virgil, *Aeneid* iv. 302-3, and on Eutropius see n. 49 above.

[67] Malalas xii. 34.

[68] Nero died in AD 68, and Eustathius evidently believed Christ had been born in 2 BC, the date transmitted by Malalas (see Jeffreys, "Chronological Structures", p. 121).

allowed them to incorporate myths of the gods into history while rejecting the gods' divinity[69].

The neglect of classical Greece that some have seen as typical of Malalas and later Byzantines also seems to go back to Eustathius[70]. Malalas's few entries on classical Greece are little more than lists of names, including Sophocles, Euripides, Herodotus, Thucydides, Demosthenes, Aristophanes, Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle[71]. Yet the reason for such cursory treatment cannot be that the Byzantines considered these authors unimportant, because the works of most of them were fundamental to the Byzantine school curriculum. On the contrary, since every educated Byzantine had read them anyway, all Eustathius thought necessary was to mention where they fit into his narrative. In this, Malalas followed Eustathius's history. Malalas also included its information on Antioch, where Eustathius had lived when he wrote.

Though plagiarism is in its strictest sense a modern concept, what Malalas did was dishonest by the standards of his time. Of course, copying sources without acknowledgement was universally accepted practice before the Renaissance, and Malalas was not the only historian who mostly followed one source: Zosimus largely paraphrased Eunapius of Sardis, and Theophylact Simocatta largely paraphrased John of Epiphania, though both Zosimus and Theophylact consulted other sources as well[72]. Even in the sixth century, however, declaring in a preface that one had read many sources one had not read was a lie about something that mattered, and inventing sources that had never existed was a still more serious deception, a systematic falsification meant to mislead and confuse one's readers. Malalas's inventions of historical information also differ sharply from the speculative reconstructions made by many Byzantine historians in an effort to construct

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[69] On Diodorus and Euhemerus, see most recently K. Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus and the First Century* (Princeton, 1990), pp. 55 and 68-73, and M. Winiarczyk, *Euhemeros von Messene* (Leipzig, 2002), though neither scholar mentions Malalas, whose work would seem to be important evidence for their subjects. On the other hand, S. Reinert, "The Image of Dionysus in Malalas' Chronicle", in *Byzantine Studies in Honor of Milton V. Anastos*, ed. S. Vryonis (Malibu, 1985), pp. 1-41, exaggerates Malalas's originality by minimizing his use of earlier euhemerizing material. [Benjamin Garstad (see n. 52 above) argues that the euhemerizing material in Malalas derives not from Euhemerus but from another source.]

[70] Cf. Scott, "Malalas", pp. 67-8 and 76-8.

[71] Malalas vi. 16 and 27 and vii. 15-16.

[72] See Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 82, 109-10, 309, 333.

detailed and elegant histories from scanty source material; Malalas, whose source was already a detailed and elegant history, added his inventions in order to deceive his readers into thinking he had additional sources. If Malalas wrote his history in the hope of obtaining an important promotion in the bureaucracy, he was also in effect forging his credentials, because the government preferred real scholars to mere copyists of scholarship.

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If the argument so far seems to depend too much on assumptions about a text that is now lost and can be reconstructed arbitrarily to fit my theory, we can add one further element: the history of John of Antioch. John (it will be simplest to call John of Antioch "John" and John Malalas "Malalas") remains a shadowy figure, even though much of his history survives[73]. We know it from a fragment of one manuscript of the original text; from the *Excerpts* made for Constantine VII; from some articles in the *Suda*; and from a few other selections. Its title was *Chronological History*[74]. The earliest event in our fragments is the Creation, and the latest is the execution of the emperor Phocas in 610. The Constantinian *Excerpts* may even preserve

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[73] Though the new edition with long introduction by U. Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta ex Historia Chronica* (*Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* CLIV, Berlin, 2005), pp. xi-clxxiii (English abstract on pp. clxxv-clxxx) represents a great advance, the secondary literature on John of Antioch remains unsatisfactory (cf. B. Croke, "Modern Study of Malalas", in *Studies*, ed. Jeffreys, pp. 327-38). The most detailed study is P. Sotiroudis, *Untersuchungen zum Geschichtswerk des Johannes von Antiocheia* (Thessalonica, 1989), which makes useful observations but tries to date John to 520-30 by identifying him with the "John the Rhetor" persuasively identified as John Malalas throughout *Studies*, ed. Jeffreys (which appeared too late for Sotiroudis to consider); Sotiroudis also ignores several earlier articles that come to conclusions incompatible with his thesis, especially E. Patzig: "Die Abhängigkeit des Johannes Antiochenus von Johannes Malalas", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, x (1901), 40-53, and "Die römischen Quellen des salmasischen Johannes Antiochenus", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, xiii (1904), 13-50. See also A. Karpozēlos, *Byzantinoi historikoi kai chronographoi* (Athens, 1997), i. 574-8; F. Walton, "A Neglected Historical Text", *Historia*, xiv (1965), 236-51; R. Scott, "Byzantine Chronicle Writing: 2: The Byzantine Chronicle after Malalas", in *Studies*, ed. Jeffreys, pp. 38-40, and Jeffreys, "Malalas in Greek", pp. 251-2. I thank Elizabeth Jeffreys for calling my attention to Roberto's edition.

[74] For the title, see Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta*, p. xi.

John's ending, though it would be a lame one: "Phocas had a mistress, Callinice, a former prostitute. This Phocas was bloodthirsty. End of the history of John the Monk". Since the fact that John was a monk is not recorded elsewhere, this final note may be by John himself[75]. In any case, John was evidently a monk from Antioch who lived past the year 610.

Since John's fragments include some detailed information on events under Phocas at Constantinople, where John's work was later preserved, John was presumably in the capital around that time. Though his fragments include just two sentences on the eighty years after 518, he treats Phocas's reign in some detail, beginning with a report that in 598 the emperor Maurice wanted to betray his own soldiers to the Avars in Thrace but was opposed by Phocas, then a junior officer. This absurd story was probably invented to justify Phocas's usurpation in 602, and as such would have circulated in Constantinople only during Phocas's reign. John seems therefore to have arrived in the capital before Phocas's fall, perhaps when Antioch began to be threatened by the Persians around 608, and to have finished writing his history in Constantinople soon after 610[76].

John's fragments are about two-thirds as long as our text of Malalas (including the parts of both works that cover events after Anastasius's reign). The heading of one of our sets of excerpts from John's history appears to be derived from a preface that closely paralleled Malalas's preface: "From the work of John of Antioch on the times from the Creation of the world, composed, as he says, from the books of Moses, Africanus, Eusebius Pamphili, Pausanias[?], Didymus, and others". This list includes the first five authors listed in Malalas's preface, all of whom are genuine, but omits the fictitious Theophilus and Clement, who come next in Malalas's list[77].

John's fragments reveal constant and close similarities to Malalas's

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[75] John of Antioch frs. 1 (Creation), 321 (execution of Phocas), and 320 (quoted; I prefer to place fr. 321 before 320). However, if the last phrase in fr. 320 is not by John but by the excerptors, it could mean that this was the end of the excerpts from John but not necessarily the end of his text.

[76] John of Antioch frs. 314 and 315 (one sentence each on Justinian and Justin II) and 316 (on Maurice's alleged betrayal); cf. M. Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and His Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 121-4.

[77] Cf. Malalas's preface with Roberto's apparatus to John of Antioch fr. 1: Ἀπὸ τῆς περὶ χρόνων καὶ (read ἀπὸ) κτίσεως κόσμου πονηθείσης, ὥς φησιν, ἀπὸ βίβλων Μωσέως, Ἀφρικανοῦ, Εὐσεβίου Παππίου (read Παμφ<ίλου, Παυσαν>ίου?) καὶ Διδύμου καὶ ἑτέρων. At least these names should presumably have been printed in Roberto's text, since they are quoted from John himself.

work, but also frequent and dramatic differences. Down to the reign of Anastasius, John's fragments are written in a clear Atticizing Greek not unlike that of Procopius, with the usual learned archaisms such as the dual number (for two of something). Yet John's fragments on the period after Anastasius are written in much simpler and more "popular" Greek[78]. John cites many of the same authors as Malalas, but cites others as well; moreover, John cites some of the authorities that he shares with Malalas as sources for information that Malalas fails to mention.

John includes citations closely resembling those in Malalas from nineteen authors, most of whom were little known in Byzantine times[79]. Yet John also includes twenty-six citations without parallels in our text of Malalas. While most of these references are to authors Malalas cites for other information, five are to authors Malalas never mentions[80]. In addition, John shows a more accurate knowledge of his sources than Malalas does. For example, where Malalas cites "the most learned Apollonius, the historian", John refers to the poet of the *Argonautica* as "Apollonius Rhodius"[81]. Another striking fact is that, in our surviving fragments, John never cites any of the nine sources that Malalas evidently fabricated, even though such sources

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[78] For the dual number, see John of Antioch frs. 145.2 line 235 (ἀμφοῖν), 174.3 (δυεῖν), 190.2 (τὼ χεῖρε), and 311 line 2 (τοῖν βλεφάροιν). Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta*, pp. xix-xx n. 14 and xlii-xliv, attributes the apparent difference in style after fr. 313 to the copyist of one of the manuscripts (*Scorialensis* Ω I 11) of the *Excerpts on Plots against Monarch*; but this looks like special pleading. Note that this manuscript faithfully transmits the duals in frs. 174.3 and 311 and is not a source of the particularly simplistic fr. 320.

[79] John of Antioch frs. 2 (Ovid, Plutarch, Pisander, Servius, Pergamus, and Josephus; cf. Malalas i. 3-5), 6.2 line 38 ("Herodotus" MS; emended to "Herodorus" in Roberto's edition, but cf. Malalas i. 14, which also has "Herodotus"), 7.2 (Homer and Palaephatus; cf. Malalas ii. 1 [Jeffreys 2]), 9 (Hermes Trismegistus; cf. Malalas ii. 4 [Jeffreys 5]), 20 (Josephus again; cf. Malalas iii. 2), 23.2b (Palaephatus again; cf. Malalas iii. 12 [Jeffreys 10]), 23.1 (Africanus; cf. Malalas iii. 11 [Jeffreys 9]), 26.1 (Apollonius Rhodius; cf. Malalas iv. 9 [Jeffreys 13]), 48.2 line 29 (Sisyphus; cf. Malalas v. 18 [Jeffreys 49]), and 58 (Charax; cf. Malalas vii. 4).

[80] John of Antioch frs. 19 (Plutarch), 42.2 (Dictys), 44 line 26 (Dictys again), 47.2 lines 6-7 (Virgil), 47.2 line 23 (Philochorus), 62 (Suetonius), 94 (Virgil again),145.2 lines 63-4 (Livy and Diodorus), 145.2 lines 88, 152, 176, 194, 212, 243, 263, and 306 (Plutarch again), 145.2 lines 121 and 139 (Sulla), 145.2 line 269 (Sallust), 145.2 line 306 (Diodorus again), 147 lines 12-16 (Antiochus, Strabo, and Livy again), 150.1 line 140 (Posidonius), and 172 line 87 (Dio). For Diodorus and Livy, see Walton, "Neglected Historical Text", pp. 240-51.

[81] Cf. John of Antioch fr. 26.1 with Malalas iv. 9 (Jeffreys 13).

account for more than one-fifth of Malalas's citations[82].

The dominant, if hesitant, opinion among scholars today has been that John of Antioch, apart from any use of Malalas, independently consulted between ten and nineteen authors[83]. Remarkably, but demonstrably, John shows at least indirect knowledge of the text of the fourth-century Latin historian Ammianus Marcellinus, perhaps even including parts of the text that are now lost, though Ammianus's long and rare work can scarcely have been translated into Greek[84]. John's fragments also display unmistakable parallels with passages in Procopius's sixth-century *History of the Wars*, though these only concern events before Procopius's lifetime, not the contemporary history that was Procopius's main subject[85].

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[82] The apparently fictitious sources of Malalas are Bottius, Clement, Domninus, Eutychianus, Membronius of Babylon, Nestorianus, Philostratus, Theophilus, and Timotheus (see n. 50 above). My reckoning of Malalas's citations is based on Jeffreys, "Malalas' Sources", pp. 172-96 (219 citations, 45 of them of apparently fictitious sources).

[83] See Sotiroudis, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 85-147 (suggesting, however, on pp. 141-2, that the information others attribute to Candidus and Eustathius may come from John himself, since Sotiroudis believed John wrote in the 520s, not after 610). Cf. Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta*, pp. cxxv-clvii, who adds Dictys, Dionysius, and Philostratus. For Diodorus, cf. Walton, "Neglected Historical Text" (with p. 237 n. 7 on the possibility that John consulted Eutropius in Latin).

[84] See Patzig, "Römischen Quellen", pp. 13-44; M. DiMaio: "The Antiochene Connection: Zonaras, Ammianus Marcellinus, and John of Antioch on the Reigns of the Emperors Constantius II and Julian", *Byzantion*, 1 (1980), 158-85, "*Infaustis Ductoribus Praeviis*: The Antiochene Connection, Part II", *Byzantion*, li (1981), 502-10, "Smoke in the Wind: Zonaras' Use of Philostorgius, Zosimus, John of Antioch, and John of Rhodes in his Narrative on the Neo-Flavian Emperors", *Byzantion*, lviii (1988), 230-55; and Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta*, p. cxli. Much of Patzig's and DiMaio's argument depends on parallels between Ammianus and John Zonaras, who evidently had a complete text of John of Antioch and can hardly have consulted Ammianus directly; but for direct parallels see John of Antioch frs. 263 (cf. Ammianus xv. 8. 17), 264 (cf. Ammianus xx. 4, xx. 10, and xxi. 15. 1-3), 265 (cf. Ammianus xxi. 14.1), 266 (cf. Ammianus xvi. 10.1 6, referring to a lost book), 269 (cf. Ammianus xviii. 1. 4, a clear parallel overlooked by Roberto), and 276 (cf. Ammianus xxvi. 9. 7-9, xxvi. 8. 2, and xxxi. 1. 4- 5).

[85] See Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta*, pp. clii-cliii (conjecturing that John and Procopius shared a common source) and John of Antioch frs. 22.2 (an alleged Phoenician inscription; cf. Procopius, *Wars* iv. 10. 13-22), 290 (the rivalry between Aetius and Boniface; cf. Procopius, *Wars* iii. 3. 14-36), 293.1 (Maximus, Eudoxia, and Gaiseric; cf. Procopius, *Wars* iii. 4. 36-5.2, with *Wars* v. 12. 13-15 on

Moreover, John supplies a good deal of chronological data that Malalas either fails to record or records less accurately. For example, John correctly records that Nero died at age thirty, while Malalas claims that Nero died at sixty-nine. Presumably not by coincidence, John never mentions Nero's grey hair, which Malalas describes[86]. Oddly, while Malalas praises Anastasius's prefect Marinus, under whom Malalas seems to have served, John depicts Marinus as a corrupt official with corrupt relatives. No one has explained why John should have formed a negative opinion of a man who was commended by John's main source and had probably died years before John was born[87].

Modern scholars, insofar as they have faced these problems at all, have thought either that John of Antioch depended on Malalas or that Malalas depended on John. John's dependence on Malalas, maintained more than a century ago by Edwin Patzig, was most recently defended by Umberto Roberto in his new edition of John's fragments. If this view is right, John must have rewritten the earliest version of Malalas's history in Attic Greek, in the process correcting hundreds of Malalas's historical mistakes and adding much new material from authors as varied as Dio, Ammianus, and Procopius. John would also apparently have been learned and astute enough to detect and delete all Malalas's many citations of fictitious authors. Then John must have used much simpler Greek to compose a continuation of Malalas up to 610. John would therefore emerge as an immensely but inconsistently learned man, who had access to excellent sources but chose to make most use of Malalas's highly inaccurate work, laboriously correcting its pervasive errors.

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the Armoricans, though Procopius's Ἀρβόρυχοι and John's Αἰμοριχιανοί [fr. 293.1 line 31] may both distort Eustathius's original spelling [Ἀρμοριχανοί?]), 293.2 (Valentinian III, Maximus, Maximus's wife, and Aëtius; cf. Procopius, *Wars* iii. 4. 16-29), and 296 (Gaiseric and Olybrius; cf. Procopius, *Wars* iii. 6. 6).

[86] E.g., John of Antioch frs. 69 (the Roman monarchy lasted 243 years [753-510 BC]), 141 (635 AUC [118 BC] corresponded to Olympiad 164 [120-116 BC]), 150.1 lines 128-9 (from the Trojan War to Julius Caesar's victory in the civil war was 1,124 years [1172?-48 BC]), 151 (Caesar was assassinated in 709 AUC [44 BC correct]), 171 (Claudius lived 63 years 2 months 13 days [correct] and reigned 13 years [correct]; cf. Malalas x. 22 and 29 [Jeffreys 28]: Claudius reigned 14 years 9 months and lived 65 years), 174.3 (Nero lived 30 years [correct] and reigned 2 months less than 14 years [actually 13 years 8 months]; cf. Malalas x. 29 [Jeffreys 30] and 40: Nero reigned 13 years 2 months, had gray hair, and lived 69 years), and 177 (Otho lived 38 years [correct] and reigned 95 days [actually 92 days]; cf. Malalas x. 42: Otho reigned 3 months and lived 53 years).

[87] Cf. John of Antioch fr. 313 with Malalas xvi. 16.

John would also have been careful and educated enough to turn Malalas's more popular Greek into Attic, yet too careless or ignorant to write Attic Greek on his own. This reconstruction appears incredible[88].

The opposite case, for Malalas's dependence on John, was maintained by Patzig's contemporary Erich Gleye, and also has its adherents today, including the author of a recent monograph on John, Panagiotis Sotiroudis. According to this view, John of Antioch wrote a highly erudite history up to the reign of Anastasius in Attic Greek, apparently between 518 and 527. This work must then have been read, rewritten, and continued in "popular" Greek by Malalas by 527. More than eighty years later, independently of Malalas, John of Antioch's history would have been continued up to the reign of Phocas in simple Greek by a much less educated anonymous writer, whom later authors mistook for John of Antioch himself. The objection that John of Antioch is unattested before 610 can be answered, if not very persuasively, by supposing that John of Antioch has been confused with John Malalas, who also came from Antioch[89]. A more serious objection is that this theory fails to explain the similarities between the histories of John of Antioch and Eustathius of Epiphania. Those two historians cannot have been entirely independent of each other if both wrote similar universal histories at Antioch between 518 and 527, citing at least a dozen of the same authors, including some as rare as Charax, Dexippus, Priscus, and Pisander[90]. Yet a few years in the 520s seems too little time for either Eustathius or John to have copied the other and then for one of them to have been copied by Malalas.

Both the theory that John of Antioch copied Malalas and the theory that Malalas copied John are profoundly unsatisfactory. By 1901, Patzig and Gleye had refuted each other so devastatingly in the pages of the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* that its editor, Karl Krumbacher, declared the

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[88] For the most complete statement of this view, see Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta*, pp. xi-xxx, following Patzig, "Abhängigkeit".

[89] For the most complete statement of this view, see Sotiroudis, *Untersuchungen*, esp. pp. 148-53, followed tentatively by Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. lxxxi.

[90] The others are the Bible, Josephus, Eusebius, Diodorus, Dio, Herodian, Zosimus, and Strabo. Cf. n. 83 above (for John's sources, including those that he cites and those that modern scholars have conjectured he used) and n. 108 below (for Eustathius's sources).

controversy closed[91]. For more than a century, neither side has plausibly answered the objections of the other, and each seems always to have assumed that refuting the opposing position would establish the validity of its own. But this assumption is mistaken, because the parallels between John of Antioch and Malalas need not mean that one copied the other. The parallels could perfectly well mean that both of them copied a third author.

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The solution is that John of Antioch neither copied nor was copied by Malalas, but that both of them copied Eustathius of Epiphania. Malalas, as we have seen, paraphrased Eustathius's history carelessly, putting it into his own more popular Greek and fabricating several sources in an effort to conceal his debt to Eustathius. By contrast, John of Antioch faithfully reproduced Eustathius's Atticizing style and thorough scholarship, apparently copying Eustathius's text almost verbatim until it broke off in the middle of the reign of Anastasius. Then John, who had enough education to copy Eustathius's Attic Greek correctly but not enough to write good Attic Greek himself, composed a brief continuation up to the reign of Phocas in his own simpler Greek. Eustathius was the one who made the hostile reference to his contemporary Marinus the Syrian. John copied Eustathius's criticism, but Malalas deleted it, since Marinus seems to have employed Malalas.

In one instance, Malalas does appear to have copied Eustathius more accurately than John did. Both John and Malalas say that Paris of Troy, rather than judging Aphrodite the most beautiful goddess in a competition, composed an encomium of Aphrodite as the personification of desire. According to Malalas, this encomium said that desire "produces children, wisdom, discretion, arts, and everything else for men and beasts", while according to John the encomium said that desire "produces everything evil for men". Since the latter version makes no sense in an encomium, here John, who as a monk had to defend strict moral standards, must have substituted a more edifying version for the original text of Eustathius[92]. Yet this is the only case I have noticed in which Malalas seems to have stayed closer than John to Eustathius's original text.

That as a rule John avoided paraphrasing Eustathius is apparent from

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[91] See Krumbacher's note at the end of Patzig, "Abhängigkeit", p. 53; cf. Croke, "Modern Study", p. 336.

[92] Cf. Malalas v. 2 with John of Antioch fr. 40 lines 10-14 and Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta*, p. cxxi.

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the contrast between the formal style of John's text up to Anastasius's reign, and the simplicity of John's own style afterwards. Since we have lost almost all of Eustathius's original work and a large part of John's, we cannot be sure whether John abbreviated Eustathius somewhat; but John's fragments are so extensive that they seem to rule out any drastic abridgement. Though abridgement of Eustathius's original text could be the reason why we lack parallels in John for some of the material Malalas evidently took from Eustathius, the loss of much of our text of John is a sufficient explanation.

Few if any of the parts of Malalas's text without parallels in John seem to have come from a source other than Eustathius or Malalas's imagination. The possibility that Malalas found a little information elsewhere cannot be conclusively ruled out, but the ubiquity of his errors and inventions shows that Malalas was no scholar, and if he had done much research of his own he would scarcely have gone to such lengths to disguise his debt to Eustathius[93]. That some sorts of material are common in Malalas but are nearly or entirely absent from our fragments of John is hardly surprising, since most of John's fragments are selections made on specific topics for the *Excerpts* of Constantine VII. For example, although John's fragments include much less about Antioch than Malalas does, the reason is probably that the excerptors, working in Constantinople long after the empire had lost Antioch, were less interested in that city than Eustathius, John, and Malalas had been, and made selections accordingly. Parts of John without parallels in Malalas show that Malalas paraphrased Eustathius more carelessly as he went along, and in particular omitted most of Eustathius's treatment of the Roman Republic, which is the subject of our few surviving pages of John's original text.

A comparison of Malalas with John's fragments can give us a rough idea of how much of John we have lost[94]. Our fragments of John up to the

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[93] Note that Malalas vii. 12 mentions finding a work by an otherwise unknown "Brunichius" at Thessalonica, and that Malalas x. 12 mentions finding a document concerning Christ and Veronica in a house at Paneas in Palestine; but these may be fabrications by Malalas, or more or less distorted versions of information taken by him from Eustathius.

[94] Calculating direct overlapping between Malalas's text and John's fragments is often problematic, because Malalas's distortions have made the parallels more or less inexact, especially in Malalas's later books. Note that Thurn, *Malalas*, pp. 536-7, finds parallels in John to 64 chapters in Malalas, while Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta*, pp. 632-4, finds parallels in John to 125 chapters in Malalas, almost twice as many. Even though more than 125 chapters in Malalas derive from material from Eustathius that was also used for existing fragments of John, many of

reign of Anastasius are about three-quarters as long as the corresponding parts of our text of Malalas. These fragments cannot, however, amount to as much as seventy-five per cent of the original text of Eustathius, even on the reasonable assumption that John virtually transcribed it. Though some of our text of Malalas is missing, the losses seem to be modest up to Anastasius's reign; and even those losses were offset by the fanciful additions Malalas made to Eustathius's text, including physical descriptions of emperors, names of fictitious sources, and other bits of invented information. More significantly, a comparison between the texts of Malalas and John suggests that Malalas left out almost one-quarter of the material covered by John, most of it on the Roman Republic. If John's fragments are about seventy-five per cent as long as seventy-five per cent of the original text of Eustathius, they preserve a little more than half of that text, a proportion that seems plausible when one reads through John's fragments themselves. This proportion is likely to be more or less correct even if John himself abbreviated Eustathius.

If this reconstruction is right, several important conclusions follow. First, a large part of the *Chronological Epitome* of Eustathius of Epiphania, perhaps more than half, has been preserved in the fragments of the *Chronological History* of John of Antioch. (The similarity between the two titles seems significant, with the difference between "history" and "epitome" probably reflecting the modesty of the real author and the self-promotion of the copyist[95]). Second, Procopius composed his treatment of earlier events in his *Wars* by drawing on Eustathius's history, including several parts still preserved among John's fragments. Third, Eustathius knew Latin, if not perfectly, and consulted a copy of Ammianus's history, probably a complete one, in Ammianus's home town of Antioch[96]. Fourth, when Eustathius was doing his research, Antioch appears to have had at least one excellent library. Finally, Eustathius's *Chronological Epitome* seems to have been the most ambitious attempt yet made – perhaps ever made – to integrate biblical, Christian, and secular sources into a truly universal history.

John's fragments, copied from Eustathius, apparently include lost and hitherto unrecognized parts of the works of Diodorus, Ammianus, and others. For example, the accurate lifespans for the tetrarchs in Malalas probably derive from Ammianus by way of Eustathius, since Ammianus in the

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Malalas's chapters are so thoroughly rewritten that they are not precisely "parallels" to John's fragments.

[95] The Greek titles are ἱστορία χρονική and χρονική ἐπιτομή.

[96] On John's (i.e., Eustathius's) Latin, see DiMaio, "Antiochene Connection", pp. 167-9 and 172.

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surviving portion of his history always includes emperors' lifespans, though this was not common historical practice at the time[97]. The stories in John and Malalas about Paris's encomium of Aphrodite, about Zeus's son Aphrus who became ruler of Africa, and most other rationalizations of mythology were evidently copied by Eustathius from Diodorus, who had in turn copied them from Euhemerus[98].

Without John's complete text, we cannot be sure whether he gave Eustathius any credit, as Malalas barely did. Our fragment of John that parallels Malalas's preface, and was presumably derived from Eustathius's preface, shows that John, like Malalas, falsely claimed to have read the authors he listed, copying the truthful claim of Eustathius. John evidently practiced some degree of deceit, since he presented under his own name a virtual transcription of Eustathius; but his copying and continuing a history written some eighty-five years earlier was a less flagrant act of deception than Malalas's paraphrasing it shortly after its author's death, and fabricating several sources to conceal what he had done. Presumably John copied a

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[97] See Ammianus xiv. 11.27 (Gallus), xxi. 15.3 (Constantius II; cf. John of Antioch fr. 264), xxv. 3. 23 (Julian), xxv. 10. 13 (Jovian), xxvi. 9. 11 (Procopius), xxx. 6. 6 (Valentinian I), xxxi. 14. 1 (Valens). Cf. Barnes, *New Empire*, p. 46, on emperors' lifespans in Malalas: Diocletian (possibly correct), Maximian (possibly correct), Constantius I (possibly correct, though perhaps we should read ξδ΄ for ἑξήκοντα at Malalas xii. 48), Galerius (probably correct, since Malalas xii. 47 says he was fifty-three when he died in 311, though Barnes incorrectly lists his implied birthdate as 249 rather than 258), Licinius (wrong for Licinius, but Malalas xii. 49-50 confuses him with Maximin, for whom a death at age forty-six in 313 implies a birthdate of 267, compatible with the c.270 suggested by Barnes, p. 39), Constantine I (possibly correct), Constantine II (correct if we read κδ΄ in Malalas xiii. 15), Constantius II (correct and in agreement with Ammianus xxi. 15.3 if we read μδ΄ in Malalas xiii. 17), and Constans (probably correct). Note that two or three times Malalas carelessly rounded off the numbers or a scribe dropped a delta at the end of a paragraph. [On Eustathius' use of Ammianus, see now Treadgold, "Byzantine Historiography and the Supposedly Lost Books of Ammianus Marcellinus", in *Armenia between Byzantium and the Orient: Celebrating the Memory of Karen Yuzbashyan*, ed. Cornelia Horn et al. (*Texts and Studies in Eastern Christianity*; Brill, Leiden, forthcoming)].

[98] Cf. John of Antioch fr. 4 and Malalas i. 9. Note that John, unlike Malalas, mentions the derivation of "Africa" from Aphrus (if Roberto is right, as he presumably is, to include in line 24 ἐξ οὗ ἡ Ἀφρικὴ from the *Excerpta Salmasiana*). Unlike Jeffreys, "Chronicle", pp. 68-9, I see no inconsistency between deriving Africa from Aphrus and deriving Libya from Libye (as in Malalas vii. 4). On Diodorus's source Euhemerus, see n. 69 above.

manuscript of Eustathius's history at Antioch, then brought his copy to Constantinople and wrote a continuation of it. In the capital, John may well have hoped to win a bishopric or abbacy by circulating the history as his own; if so, he apparently failed, because our excerpts describe him only as a monk. Like Malalas, he may have found that, when speaking in person to his superiors, he was unable to live up to the standard of the history that he represented as his own.

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What do John's fragments reveal about the original form and contents of Eustathius's history, which must have closely resembled John's history? A comparison of John's fragments with the descriptions of Eustathius's history by Hesychius and Evagrius indicates that Eustathius's *Chronological Epitome* included a preface and three parts, bound in two volumes. The first part, which filled the first volume, was entitled "Ancient History" and was divided into five books, each beginning with biblical history and ending with gentile history. The "Ancient History" started with the creation of the world and concluded with the accession of Alexander the Great. In the second volume, Eustathius's second part, entitled "Consuls", comprised another five books, each beginning with Roman history and concluding with Hellenistic history. Overlapping with Book V of the "Ancient History", the "Consuls" began with Aeneas's voyage to Italy from Troy and concluded with the end of the Roman Republic. Also in the second volume, Eustathius's third part, evidently entitled "Emperors", seems to have had four books, beginning with the accession of Augustus and breaking off in the reign of Anastasius. Though this part dealt primarily with the reigns of emperors, it gave some attention to church history, including the life of Christ. The books of the three parts cannot have been numbered consecutively, because Hesychius knew that there were nine books (five plus four) in the second volume, which was all he had, but not how many books there were in the whole work[99].

Eustathius's methods of organizing his work were idiosyncratic, reflecting his personal views on history. Since he explicitly inserted a number of dates in his text, he apparently felt that he could disregard strict chronological order in his narrative. He gave precedence first to biblical

[99] For details of this conjectural reconstruction of the plan of Eustathius's history (and of John's), which differs significantly from the reconstruction of John's history in Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta*, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 320-6.

history and then to Roman history, but also made room for Greek history and church history. Eustathius thought that great men such as Philip of Macedon, Scipio Africanus, Pyrrhus, and Sulla were of crucial historical importance, for better or worse. Following Euhemerus, Eustathius believed paganism was based on the historical error of mistaking great men for divinities.

Like his near contemporaries Zosimus and John the Lydian, Eustathius considered the rule of the Roman kings to have been "tyranny" and "slavery", and thought the Roman Republic represented "freedom"[100]. Malalas may have passed over most of this part in alarm at its implied criticism of the empire. Eustathius considered it no accident that Caesar and Nero were related to the dynasty of "tyrants" descended from Aeneas, or that the Brutus who helped to assassinate Caesar was a descendant of the Brutus who had helped depose Tarquin the Proud and served as one of the first consuls[101]. Though Eustathius preferred the Republic to the empire, he approved of orthodox Christianity, and of the Greek East in general. He was proud of his adopted city of "Antioch the Great", and took an interest in Byzantium/Constantinople as the capital of the state in which he lived[102].

To judge from one fragment of John's text, Eustathius provided a strikingly well-informed description of the rebellion of the usurper Leontius, the empress Verina, and the Isaurian general Illus in 484-8. He supplied most information on the siege of the rebels by Zeno's troops in the Isaurian fortress of Cherris. This fragment includes such details as that Verina died nine days after the siege began, that the rebel officer Marsus died after thirty days, and that Illus spent his time reading while Leontius fasted and bewailed his fate. After the fortress was betrayed, Zeno beheaded Leontius and Illus and "took terrible vengeance on all the captives, killing some indiscriminately and depriving others of their property"[103]. Later, Eustathius evidently wrote that Anastasius curbed official corruption soon after his accession in 491, but then, "taking a turn for the worse, completely removed the whole aristocracy of the empire, offering all government offices for sale and allying himself with evildoers". Such miscreants evidently included the future prefect Marinus,

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[100] John of Antioch frs. 69, 70, 79 (on the tyranny of the kings) and 80.1 (on freedom under the consuls). On Zosimus and John the Lydian, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 107-14 and 258-64.

[101] John of Antioch frs. 150.1 lines 133-7 and 151 lines 3-4 (Bruti) and 174.4 (descendants of Aeneas).

[102] See John of Antioch frs. 10, 49.1, and 130 (on Antioch) and 26.3, 209.1-3, and 256 (on Byzantium).

[103] John of Antioch fr. 306 (quotation at lines 103-5).

who by 498 was already the chief financial officer of Syria. Eventually, Marinus became Anastasius's principal financial adviser and then praetorian prefect of the East[104].

We can gather from Evagrius that Eustathius expressed a highly unfavourable opinion of Zeno, which Evagrius has transmitted in detail[105]. Yet, if Eustathius lived at Antioch, he presumably had no direct contact with the emperor in Constantinople, and his vague charges of Zeno's supposed debauchery seem poorly informed. The real reason for his strong resentment may well be that Eustathius had supported the usurpation of Leontius, who, with the help of Illus, had held Antioch for two months in 484. As a Chalcedonian, Leontius gained the support of the Chalcedonian Patriarch Calendion of Antioch, whom Zeno deposed as a result. Since Eustathius was probably a Chalcedonian, like the great majority in his home town of Epiphania, he seems likely to have favored both Leontius and Calendion[106].

Neither Malalas, Evagrius, nor Hesychius mentions Eustathius's profession, though they usually mention the professions of the authors they cite and should have been able to read Eustathius's title and preface, which would normally have mentioned the author's professional position. The explanation may be that Eustathius had no professional position, having been cashiered for supporting Leontius in 484. Even if Eustathius was rehabilitated after 492, when Anastasius's government purged Zeno's partisans, any strong supporter of Chalcedon would probably have fallen out of favour as

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[104] John of Antioch frs. 308 and 312 (quotation at lines 1-3). The statement in the latter fragment that Anastasius changed for the worse during his reign seems to show that Eustathius had a nuanced opinion of Anastasius, not that John tried to reconcile Eustathius's criticism with another source that disagreed, as argued by Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta*, pp. cxlix-clii. On Marinus, see *PLRE*, ii. Marinus 7, and on his office of *tractator* of Syria see Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 449-51.

[105] Evagrius ii. 15 (466), iii. 26-7 (479-90), iii. 29 (491), iii. 37 (502-3), i. 19 and v. 24 (Eustathius's repetition of other sources), and iii. 1-3 (Evagrius's negative opinion of Zeno, also attributed to Eustathius by P. Allen, *Evagrius Scholasticus the Church Historian* [Louvain, 1981], pp. 140-1). For Evagrius's use of Eustathius, see Evagrius i. 19, iii. 37, and v. 24, and M. Whitby, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus* (Liverpool, 2000), p. xxvi.

[106] See Evagrius iii. 27 (Leontius's usurpation; cf. *PLRE*, ii. Leontius 17), iii. 16 (Calendion's deposition for supporting Leontius), and iii. 34 (Chalcedonianism at Epiphania, which was so prevalent that the pro-Monophysite Anastasius had to leave its Chalcedonian bishop in office for fear of violence). Cf. H. Elton, "Illus and the Imperial Aristocracy under Zeno", *Byzantion*, lxx (2000), 393-407.

Anastasius gradually revealed his preference for Monophysitism. Marinus, whom Eustathius evidently disliked, was a strong Monophysite.

Thus, the detailed description of Leontius's rebellion in John's text supports the conjecture that Eustathius had backed Leontius and was punished under Zeno; and the remarks about Anastasius in John's text support the conjecture that Eustathius had been a government official but found his career blocked during Anastasius's reign. Perhaps Eustathius was himself besieged in Cherris and, after being deprived of his post under Zeno and reinstated under Anastasius, lost it again during the administration of Marinus. In any event, a feeling that contemporary emperors had wronged him and his friends would naturally have sharpened Eustathius's resentment of the "tyranny" of earlier Roman monarchs[107].

In addition to what he knew from his own experience and that of his contemporaries, Eustathius compiled his *Chronological Epitome* from a wide range of sources; probably this is the reason why he called his lengthy work an "epitome". Even when he used previous compilations, he took care to preserve as many of their source references as he could. Beginning with the sources mentioned by Evagrius, John of Antioch, and Malalas, and subtracting the nine sources invented by Malalas, we can identify about eighty-nine of Eustathius's sources[108]. Some of these were surely indirect

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[107] Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta*, pp. xiii-xiv, attributes this hatred of tyranny to John of Antioch's dislike of Phocas, but also notices the text's sympathy for Illus (pp. cxlvii-cxlix), which he believes John found in the history of Candidus of Isauria. Candidus appears, however, to have favored Zeno, not Illus; see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 103-7.

[108] This total begins with the twenty-seven sources mentioned by Evagrius v. 24 (the Bible, Josephus, Eusebius, Theodoret, Sozomen, Socrates, Charax of Pergamum, Ephorus, Theopompus, Dionysius, Polybius, Appian, Diodorus, Dio, Herodian, Nicostratus of Trapezus, Dexippus, Arrian, Asinius Quadratus, Zosimus, and Priscus) and i. 20 (adding Strabo, Phlegon, Pisander, Ulpian, Libanius, and Julian). To these can be added fifty-three other (and not obviously fictitious) sources mentioned by Malalas (Africanus, Anthius, Aquila, Archilochus, Auleas, Bassus, Brunichius, Cyril of Alexandria, Dinarchus, Didymus, Dictys of Crete, Irenaeus, Euripides, Eutropius, Florus, Fortunus, Hermes Trismegistus, Herodotus, Homer, John the Bishop, Callimachus, Castor of Rhodes, Cephalion, Licinius, Livy, Lucan, Lucian, Magnus of Carrhae, Manetho, Ninus, Orpheus, Ovid, Palaephatus, Pausanias, Phidalius of Corinth, Pisander, Pergamus, Philochorus of Athens, Plato, Pliny, Plutarch, Porphyry, Pythagoras, Rheginus, Sallust, Servius, Sisyphus of Cos, Sophocles, Sotates, Tatian, Thallus, Suetonius, and Virgil; cf. Jeffreys, "Malalas' Sources", pp. 172-96). To these should be added five more sources mentioned by

sources; for example, we can see that the citations of Antiochus, Strabo, and Livy preserved in one of John's fragments were borrowed by Eustathius from Plutarch[109]. Yet Eustathius was not just a compiler. As far as we can judge from what remains of his work, he wove his sources together with intelligence, skill, and careful attention to chronology, and gave them some literary polish. The result seems to have been a history of the world that was as wide-ranging and accurate as any Byzantine could have written.

Because of his sudden death around 526, Eustathius's history was never finished and was never formally distributed as such. As a long work, it would have been expensive to buy or to have copied, and copies of it must always have been rare. Malalas borrowed one, quite possibly Eustathius's autograph, but apparently had to return it before he left for Constantinople around 527. In the 540s, a complete copy somehow reached Constantinople, where Procopius shows knowledge of both the earlier and the later parts[110]. Around 580, however, Hesychius could find only the second volume of Eustathius's history in the capital[111]. At least one complete copy still remained at Antioch, where Evagrius made extensive use of it in the early 590s. A decade or so later, John of Antioch presumably found Eustathius's history at Antioch, where he virtually transcribed it, probably with his own hand, then brought the transcription under his own name to Constantinople. We lose track of Eustathius's original text after Antioch fell to the Persians in 611.

John of Antioch (Sulla, Antiochus, Strabo, Posidonius, and Dio; cf. p. 734 n. 2 above) and four additional authors reasonably conjectured to be sources of material in John (Eunapius, Candidus, Philostratus, and Ammianus; cf. p. 734 nn. 5-6, above). Though this total includes a few dubious authors cited by Malalas, note that Philostratus, author of the *Life of Apollonius*, seems to have been a real source of Eustathius, though not for the information Malalas attributes to his fictitious Philostratus. Note also that John of Antioch fr. 2 cites the seemingly dubious Pergamus of Malalas i. 4 (who calls him a Pamphylian, probably by confusion with Eusebius Pamphili, cited four words later). Both John and Malalas cite Pergamus only for the popular belief that Noah's Ark had come to rest near Apamea Cibotus ("Ark"), where Malalas says its wood was to be seen "up to the present". Perhaps this Pergamus should be identified with Eustathius's contemporary Pergamius, Augustal Prefect in 482 (*PLRE*, ii. Pergamius 2), who may well have written this in a letter or an oration rather than a history.

[109] Cf. John of Antioch fr. 147 lines 12-18 with Plutarch, *Lucullus* 28.7.

[110] Cf. the parallels between Procopius and John of Antioch cited in n. 85 above. Note, however, that Procopius seems to have begun to use Eustathius only with Book III of the *Wars*; see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 193 n. 97.

[111] See n. 54 above.

Yet Eustathius's history survived, in the inaccurate paraphrase of Malalas and the more accurate transcription of John of Antioch. John of Antioch's history was used not just for the *Excerpts* made for Constantine VII but by authors such as the Patriarch Nicephorus, Theophanes Confessor, and John Zonaras[112]. John may even be the real source of some passages in later writers that are now generally attributed to Malalas, as the two works were so similar. We should also question whether Malalas was more popular than John among Byzantine readers. If our single manuscript of most of Malalas's work had been lost, we would now have much more of the work attributed to John than of that attributed to Malalas.

While much of the case presented here is conjectural, no other argument has yet provided a satisfactory explanation of the parallels linking the texts of John Malalas, John of Antioch, Evagrius, Procopius, and Ammianus. Perhaps the main obstacle to considering the present solution has been the assumption that Malalas's history is a "popular" work. To us it seems "popular" in its language, even though Malalas was probably making an unsuccessful effort to write standard literary Greek. Yet, in content, Malalas's history is by no means a popularization; rather, it paraphrases the scholarly and sophisticated universal history of Eustathius of Epiphania.

Evidently, most of the supposedly "popular" chronicle of Malalas was neither popular among Byzantine readers, nor a mere chronicle, nor the work of Malalas. Malalas contributed little more than fabrications and errors, none of which had much influence on later Byzantines. By contrast, Eustathius's careful and learned synthesis, which formed the basis of Malalas's work and almost the whole of John of Antioch's, directly or indirectly had a decisive influence on the Byzantines' conception of the past.

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[112] For later users of John of Antioch, see Sotiroudis, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 5-37, Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta*, pp. clvii-clxviii (with pp. lxxix-ci on the *Suda*), DiMaio, "Antiochene Connection" and "Smoke" (Zonaras), C. Mango, *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople, Short History: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Washington, 1990), pp. 12-14 (Nicephorus), and Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lxxxi, 174 n. 1, 181 nn. 5 and 7, 182 n. 2, 183 n. 1, 202 n. 11, 211 n. 4, and 224 n. 7 (Theophanes, including his use of Eustathius by way of John of Antioch). For a survey of writers who used or are supposed to have used Malalas, see Jeffreys, "Malalas in Greek". [See also Treadgold, "Byzantine Historiography".]

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PROCOPIUS AND THE IMPERIAL PANELS OF SAN VITALE

written with Irina Andreescu-Treadgold

The imperial panels in the church of S. Vitale at Ravenna are perhaps the most famous of all Byzantine mosaics. The two panels face each other, one on each side of the apse. The left panel (Fig. 1) shows the Byzantine emperor Justinian (r. 527-65) in the midst of his attendants. The right panel (Fig. 2) shows the empress Theodora (d. 548), Justinian's consort, similarly attended. Each member of the imperial pair wears sumptuous purple imperial robes and a crown and is distinguished by a halo. Each also carries gifts for the church, Justinian a gold paten and Theodora a gold chalice. Each group appears to be advancing toward the center of the apse across a green floor between two jeweled gold columns, which in Justinian's panel support a coffered ceiling and in Theodora's support a carved egg and dart cornice.

While the wall behind Justinian's scene is plain gold, Theodora's scene has a more elaborate background: a niche with a shell-shaped conch directly behind the figure of the empress, at the left an open doorway hung with a curtain behind a small gushing fountain on a pedestal, and at the right a section of gold ground with a drapery hanging above it. The emperor has to his right two prominent dignitaries wearing white mantles with purple tablia over short white tunics embroidered with shoulder ornaments. To their right stands a group of guardsmen carrying spears and a shield. To the emperor's left is another white-robed dignitary squeezed into a narrow space, to his left a bishop labeled Maximianus carrying a gold cross, and to Maximian's left two deacons, one carrying a Gospel book and the other a censer. Theodora has two eunuchs to her right, one of whom touches the curtain in front of the doorway as if to lift it, and to her left two prominent noblewomen and a group of five ladies-in-waiting.

Inside the church, in the overall context of the decoration of the sanctuary, these panels are located in the apse's hemicycle, which is otherwise occupied mainly by three large windows (Fig. 3). The panels are integrated into the larger apse decoration by the simple and standard means of ornamental borders and decorative architecture. The borders include a ubiquitous pearl and jewel band and a scalloped black and white one. The bejeweled columns used at the sides of each panel reappear in a slightly larger size between the windows of the apse (not illustrated).

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In the simplest sense, the intended purpose of these panels seems clear. It is to glorify the emperor Justinian and his empress, Theodora. In a wider sense, the mosaics may be conceived as a glorification of the whole institution of imperial autocracy, in Italy and throughout the world. At this time Justinian was vigorously expanding his empire beyond the lands he had inherited in the eastern Mediterranean. In 535, just after conquering northern Africa from the Vandals, the emperor sent an expedition under Belisarius, his most capable general, to take Italy from the Ostrogoths. In 540, after Belisarius secured the surrender of the Ostrogothic king Vitigis and the Ostrogoths' capital at Ravenna, he held all of Italy except for a few Ostrogothic outposts. At that point Justinian recalled Belisarius to fight the Persians in the East. The Ostrogoths then rallied and retook much of Italy before the Byzantines finally completed the conquest in 561.

The scholarly consensus is that these mosaics represent an imaginary procession, given that Justinian, Theodora, and Maximian, the archbishop of Ravenna, who is labeled in the mosaic, were never together in the same place after Maximian's consecration in 546. The figures apart from Justinian, Theodora, and Maximian are generally thought to be unidentifiable, though some tentative suggestions have been made for two or three others[1]. Various scholars have added theoretical refinements about the precise relationships to be inferred among the imperial couple, their retinue, Maximian, the Church, Italy, and the world. Such interpretations, whether right or wrong, have seemed to require neither a close examination of the condition of the mosaics nor any further identification of the figures in them. After all, the mosaics must be essentially genuine, and the central figures can hardly represent anyone other than Justinian and Theodora, who reigned when the church was consecrated and were contemporaries of Archbishop Maximian.

Four recent and contrasting views illustrate how complex the task of interpreting these panels can be[2]. Ernst Kitzinger, following a suggestion made over thirty years earlier by Gerhart Rodenwaldt, has emphasized the importance in Justinian's panel of Archbishop Maximian, and by extension

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[1] See the standard work of F. W. Deichmann, *Ravenna: Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes*, II, pt. 2, Wiesbaden, 1976, 180-87.

[2] Besides these four, see also E. Manara, "Di un ipotesi per l'individuazione dei personaggi nei pannelli del S. Vitale a Ravenna e per la loro interpretazione", *Felix Ravenna*, 4th ser., nos. 125-26, 1983, pp. 13-37; and J. Engemann, "Die religiöse Herrscherfunktion im Fünfsdulenmonument Diocletians in Rom und in den Herrschermosaiken Justinians in Ravenna", *Frühmittelalterlche Studien*, XVIII, 1984, 336-56. For the bibliography before 1976, see Deichmann.

of the Church hierarchy. Kitzinger bases his argument on Maximian's prominent place next to the emperor and the fact that he alone is identified by an inscription[3]. By contrast, Henry Maguire has seen in the same panel a comparison of Justinian and his courtiers to Christ and his Apostles. Maguire counts twelve figures attending Justinian and draws a parallel with the mosaic medallions of Christ and the apostles on the arch leading into S. Vitale's sanctuary[4].

Turning to Theodora's panel, in a poststructuralist analysis of imperial imagery Sabine MacCormack has suggested that the niche indicates that at the time of the mosaic Theodora was dead and about to pass through a doorway hung with "the veil ... between this life and the next" and preceded by "a fountain of living water". MacCormack concludes, "The mosaic thus correlates the imagery of imperial glory with the imagery of the glory of the life to come"[5]. On the other hand, in another poststructuralist study of the Justinian and Theodora panels, Charles Barber has maintained, "The privileging of the male as the performer of a public role is underlined in [Theodora's] panel by the way in which the male actors are showing the way into the darkened doorway to the female actors"[6].

Maguire has pointed out that more than one such interpretation may be correct, because the same image could be designed to have several meanings. Specifically, he notes that the mosaics of S. Vitale "celebrate the victories of Christ and of the emperor at the same time"[7]. Certainly, the messages that Christ is powerful and that the emperor has a share in Christ's power are compatible. Nevertheless, the interpretations of Kitzinger, Maguire, MacCormack, and Barber seem to contradict each other. To Kitzinger, the mosaic of Justinian minimizes imperial authority over the bishop. In Maguire's interpretation, the same mosaic puts the emperor in a relation to the bishop comparable to Christ's superiority over his Apostles.

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[3] Ernst Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making: Main Lines of Stylistic Development in Mediterranean Art, 3rd-7th Century*, Cambridge, Mass., 1977, 87-88. Cf. Gerhart Rodenwaldt, "Bemerkungen zu den Kaisermosaiken in San Vitale", *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archaologischen Instituts*, LIX-LX, 1944-45, 88-110, esp. 101-4.

[4] Henry Maguire, *Earth and Ocean: The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art*, University Park, Pa., 1987, 80.

[5] Sabine G. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley, 1981, 263.

[6] Charles Barber, "The Imperial Panels at San Vitale: A Reconsideration", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, XIV, 1990, 35, see also 19-42.

[7] Maguire (as in n. 4), 80, see also 80-83.

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For MacCormack, the Theodora mosaic implies that imperial glory transcended this world, perhaps even to the point of assuring the empress's ultimate salvation. For Barber, the same mosaic apparently puts the empress in a position less privileged than one of her eunuchs. Can all of these really be impressions that whoever planned these panels intended to convey, and succeeded in conveying to contemporaries?

Kitzinger is of course correct that the Justinian panel gives the bishop some prominence. Yet if Thomas Mathews is right to identify the panels' subject as the First Entrance of the early Byzantine liturgy, the bishop should have led the procession[8]. In that case the panel has given the emperor the greatest prominence possible; the fact that his paten slightly overlaps the bishop's elbow actually implies that he precedes the bishop, even though the bishop's feet are plainly ahead of his. Since a liturgical interpretation of such a scene in a church sanctuary is almost inevitable, a leading place for the bishop in itself would convey no particular message about ecclesiastical authority. Though such a message might be found in the striking and curiously unique inscription identifying Maximian, that could also be taken to refer to Maximian in particular rather than to bishops in general.

Maguire's interpretation – that Justinian's retinue represents the twelve Apostles – requires some manipulation of the visual evidence. We must suppose not only that a Byzantine would have counted the number of people in the scene, but also that in counting them he would have included the three guardsmen in the back row, none of whom is shown full face; for one, only a scalp is visible. The Justinian panel does not correspond to any single scene of Christ and the Apostles in S. Vitale. The obvious parallel, with the Theodora panel, lends no support to Maguire's interpretation.

MacCormack's suggestions assume an even higher level of ideological awareness at Ravenna than do Kitzinger's and Maguire's. They also demand, contrary to most modern opinion, a date after Theodora's death for at least the Theodora panel. Despite this seemingly topical reference, MacCormack insists, "Like other works of imperial art, the mosaics of San Vitale were produced at a certain time for a certain occasion, but they were intended to retain their significance independently of that occasion, once it

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[8] Thomas Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy*, University Park, Pa., 1971, 146-47. Mathews's case is supported by Robert F. Taft, *The Great Entrance: A History of the Transfer of Gifts and Other Preanaphoral Rites of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, no. 200, Rome, 1975, 30-31.

was past and forgotten''[9]. Sure of the enduring significance of these mosaics, MacCormack uses her hypothesis to reach a conclusion, which is virtually the conclusion of her book, about the transcendence of imperial power in Byzantine ideology[10]. Several reviewers have criticized the sweeping ideological inferences that MacCormack has drawn from similar hypotheses, or even from outright errors[11]. As for Barber's interpretation, the idea that a man who assists a woman or a servant who assists a mistress exercises some sort of superiority seems to be a modern misunderstanding of a traditional and hierarchical society.

Our own approach to these mosaics began not with ideology but with history. One of us, while studying Procopius's *History of the Wars* and *Secret History* and the S. Vitale panels in the course of writing a general history of Byzantium, formed a hypothesis about the identities of several of the figures in the panels[12]. To test his hypothesis, he consulted the other, who was already working on the technical and art historical aspects of mosaics at Ravenna[13]. Her examination of the imperial panels from scaffoldings over several years led to some surprising discoveries[14]. These in turn led us to reconsider the

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[9] MacCormack, 260.

[10] *Ibid.* 266: "We have observed the emergence of a concept of imperial dominion which had its roots in the classical world, but it would have been impossible to state it there without ambivalence and in the simplicity that was found in Byzantium: 'God has given you. God will keep you. / King of heaven, preserve the King on earth'". The final quotations, however, are from the 10th-century *De Ceremoniis* of Constantine VII, which as an official work on court protocol reveals nothing about the Byzantines' real opinions.

[11] See James Trilling, *Times Literary Supplement*, Aug. 13, 1982, 884; Michael McCormick, *American Journal of Philology*, CV, 1984, 494-98; and Kathleen Shelton, *Classical Philology*, LXXIX, 1984, 259-64.

[12] See Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, Stanford, Calif., 1997, esp. 174-217, on the reign of Justinian.

[13] See Irina Andreescu-Treadgold, "The Mosaic Workshop at San Vitale", in *Atti del Convegno Mosaici a San Vitale e altri restauri*, ed. A. M. Iannucci et al., Ravenna, 1992, 30-41, and corrigenda insert, 1-8. For the method, cf. *eadem*, the first fascicle of "The Corpus for Middle Byzantine Wall Mosaics: The Church of Santa Maria Assunta at Torcello", typescript; and for a sample entry of the "Corpus", cf. *eadem*, "Torcello IV. Cappella Sud, mosaici: Cronologia relativa, cronologia assoluta e analisi delle paste vitree", in *III Colloquio Internazzionale sul Mosaico Antico: Ravenna, 6-10 Settembre 1980* Ravenna, 1984, 535-51, app. 1 (in English), 542-49.

[14] Over several trips to Ravenna between 1990 and 1997, thanks to Architetto Annamaria Iannucci, the Soprintendenza ai Beni Architettoni e Ambientali graciously provided a moving platform for the examination of the panels as well as

internal chronology of Justinian's panel, which came to include two successive bishops. The final result was a partly revised hypothesis that identifies six of the figures accompanying Justinian and Theodora. It also seems to exclude some earlier interpretations of the ideology of the mosaics.

The only explicitly identified character in either panel is Maximian (Fig. 6), the first bishop of Ravenna to rank as an archbishop, whose name is inscribed above his head. The only other similarly identified bishop in the church's mosaics is Ecclesius, represented in the act of offering the church to Christ in the apse at the viewer's far right. This prominent position corresponds to that of the church's titular saint, Vitalis, whom Christ awards the crown of martyrdom in the same scene at the far left (Fig. 3). We know from the ninth-century chronicler Agnellus, who saw a now missing inscription in S. Vitale, that Ecclesius was the bishop who initiated the church's construction, that Maximian was the consecrating bishop, and that a certain Julianus Argentarius actually had the church built, decorated, and dedicated. Agnellus records that Julianus, a well-known patron of churches in Ravenna and probably a Greek and a banker, paid the substantial sum of 26,000 solidi to build S. Vitale[15].

Carved monograms on several capitals in the church name a third bishop, Victor, Maximian's immediate predecessor, who obviously took a part in the construction (Fig. 4). Ursicinus, who was bishop between Ecclesius

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access since 1988 to their scaffoldings erected on the sanctuary walls for the ongoing restoration of the mosaics. The moving platform could not be placed against the wall because of the width of the presbytery's socle bench, but it came near enough to allow for good observations and photographs from reasonably close quarters. A detailed knowledge of the many and diverse portraits on S. Vitale's west arch and east, south, and north walls, all of which have been successively cleaned and restored between 1988 and 1997 – as well as parts of the vault of the Lamb, which were made more accessible by the other scaffoldings – and an acquaintance with some of S. Apollinare Nuovo's mosaics, also from scaffoldings, served as the direct background for the investigation. For a preliminary report on the findings, see Irina Andreescu-Treadgold and Warren Treadgold, "Dates and Identities in the Imperial Panels of San Vitale", in *Sixteenth Annual Byzantine Studies Conference: Abstracts of Papers*, Baltimore, 1990, 52-54.

[15] Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum*, Hanover, Germ., 1878, 330, 318-19; another edition of Agnellus's work, ed. A. Testi Rasponi, is in *Raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquecento*, ed. L. A. Muratori, fasc. 200, Bologna, 1924, 198, 167.

and Victor, presumably participated as well. The exact dates of these bishops' reigns are subject to some doubt, but the most likely chronology is as follows:

Ecclesius	February 20, 522-July 27, 532
Ursicinus	February 25, 533-September 5, 536
Victor	April 4, 538-February 15, 545
Maximian	October 14, 546-February 22, 556[16]

Victor's episcopate included the year 540, when the Ostrogoths, who followed the Arian heresy although they tolerated Orthodoxy among their subjects, surrendered Ravenna to the Orthodox Byzantines.

Since S. Vitale was begun under Ecclesius and consecrated by Maximian, the work spanned about two decades and took place under four bishops and two radically different political and religious regimes, one Ostrogoth and Arian and the other Byzantine and Orthodox. The details of the work's progress and the exact participation of each sponsor are not recorded in the sources and can only be conjectured. However, that the panels were planned together as a matching set depicting the imperial couple bringing gifts to the church is clear. They appear to have been conceived from the outset as part of the apse. They surely belong to the period after 540, because the

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[16] See Giorgio Orioli, "I vescovi di Ravenna: Note di cronologia e di storia", *Bolletino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata*, n. s. 32, 1978, 45-75, dates on 63-64, except that he lists Victor's dates as Mar. 4, 537-Feb. 15, 544. According to the transmitted text of Agnellus (Holder-Egger, 324, 325; and Testi Rasponi 182, 184-85), Victor celebrated the anniversary of his consecration on Easter and had been bishop for six years, eleven months, and eleven days when he died on a Feb. 15. But this text must somehow be at fault, because it implies that Victor had been consecrated on a Mar. 4, while Easter can never fall before Mar. 22. The lengths Agnellus gives for the other episcopates show that Victor could only have been consecrated in 537 or 538. Noting that in 538 Easter fell on *Apr.* 4, Alessandro Testi Rasponi, 185 n. 1, emended the text to make Victor's episcopate six years, ten months, and eleven days (correcting *menses xi* to *menses x*). Testi Rasponi also argued that the political circumstances rule out a consecration in 537 (when Easter fell on Apr. 12). This solution, which seems practically certain, means that Victor was consecrated on Apr. 4, 538, and died on Feb. 15, 545. Deichmann, 9-10, ignoring the problem of the Easter consecration, based his preference for 544 over 545 as Victor's death date on the weak argument that the church of S. Michele in Africisco would not have been dedicated on May 7, 545, without a bishop, as was the case, unless a fairly long interval had persuaded the dedicators that no new bishop would be named soon.

Ostrogothic kings would hardly have permitted anyone to put up mosaics in their capital that glorified the emperor and empress as rulers at Ravenna.

With this background in mind, we can turn to the findings of the survey made from scaffoldings for this study. The figures in the S. Vitale panels are characterized according to conventions of Byzantine portraiture that define their age and position. The mosaicists have done this with indisputable competence and a fairly wide technical repertoire, though without excessive care for details of technique. Among the conventions known to the mosaicists was the indication of age through the choice of colors and the setting of rows in patterns to represent either younger and firmer flesh, as in the faces of Theodora's ladies-in-waiting and the young lady to their left (Fig. 10), or sagging and paler cheeks – if in a somewhat understated manner – for Theodora herself (Fig. 11) and her closest female companion (Fig. 12). Age is represented for men through hairstyles, beards or a lack of them, and brow and cheek patterns ranging from smooth to furrowed. For instance, Justinian, though clean-shaven, has the shadow of a beard (Fig. 5), while the adolescent second from his right and Theodora's eunuchs (Fig. 13) have no traces of beards. Similar features can also be seen in the gallery of Apostle portraits on the west arch, which range from young and beardless to old and gray.

In the emperor's panel, despite the essentially formulaic components – Justinian's guardsmen (Fig. 14) seem lifted from the same model book as those on the base of Theodosius I's obelisk in the Hippodrome of Constantinople (Fig. 15) – some of the characters achieve a portraitlike quality, as in the group of two dignitaries (Fig. 16) and that of the deacons (Figs. 17, 18). The visible flesh parts in the S. Vitale panels' heads and hands are made exclusively with glass tesserae, except for two of the heads, to be considered shortly, which are made mostly with stone cubes.

This last observation, which bears on the technique, is important because it allows the group as a whole to be placed in the chronologically earlier stages of the S. Vitale mosaic decoration, when glass tesserae were used overwhelmingly to render features, hands, and feet as well as ornaments. Areas similarly treated include the entire apse, the vault of the Lamb, the topmost parts of the sanctuary walls, and the top medallions of the west arch (Fig. 3). During a second phase, to give the most noticeable example, white marble and limestone usually replace the white and silver glass.

The characters in the imperial panels, for all their typological variety, share a competent pictorial and technical treatment, which shows the workshop's professionalism. Despite the seemingly uniform style, however, a few differences in details undoubtedly reveal different artisans working on

the same scaffolding, probably back to back from the center out. Back to back – and top to bottom in areas that, unlike the imperial panels, exceed the height of a man – is the standard sequence for setting mosaics as documented in various monuments. A good instance of this sequence and division of labor at S. Vitale can be found in the west arch, where the geometric ornament that frames the long panel with the medallion busts was started in the middle at the top of the arch and continued down on both sides simultaneously. This explains why the two sides came to be increasingly out of synchronization, until some elements of the repetition had to be dropped on one side at the bottom of the panel in order to correct the imbalance[17].

Stylistic differences alone can be misleading, because the individual styles within one workshop could differ as much as the styles of two workshops that were so close in date. The phases can be reliably detected only when differences in materials correspond to distinct areas of the walls that represent either work loads or repairs[18]. Thus, the evidence of the mosaics resembles the stratigraphy of an archaeological excavation. Moreover, a fuller understanding of the practices of a team of mosaicists requires that the resulting mosaics be scrutinized as archaeological artifacts, taking as the decisive factor the use of materials. These are more or less uniform for the members of a given workshop, probably because of the way in which supplies were procured in bulk[19].

Such archaeological scrutiny indicates that two workshops, distinguished by a slightly different selection of materials, were employed within a short space of time in S. Vitale, probably with some overlap in membership, or even that the same workshop resumed work after an interval. Differences that betray either more than one artist or several phases of the execution of a decoration are much easier to identify in a continuous or repeated ornamental band than in the less regular representations of people or

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[17] See Andreescu-Treadgold, 1992.

[18] A work load is the part of a mosaic set on a single plaster surface while that surface is still wet. For a discussion of repairs that includes these panels, see Irina Andreescu-Treadgold, "The Emperor's New Crown and St. Vitalis' New Clothes", in *41 Corso di cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina*, Ravenna, 1995, 149-86, esp. 149-60.

[19] For a discussion of materials, see Irina Andreescu-Treadgold, "Torcello V. Workshop Methods of the Mosaicists in the South Chapel", *Venezia Arti*, IX, 1995, 15-28; and for documentation of the procurement of supplies in a 14th-century workshop, see most recently C. Harding, "The Production of Medieval Mosaics: The Orvieto Evidence", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XLIII, 1989, 73-102.

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scenery. At S. Vitale a simple but revealing geometrical element, the pearl and jewel border that runs ubiquitously through the entire mosaic composition and separates and connects all its main units, was at this stage of the investigation the decisive factor in determining the changes in the workshop, which other evidence confirms.

Thus, several years of study of the mosaics, from scaffoldings shifted from one wall to another, established the existence of a division between two phases at the same level on all four walls of the sanctuary and in the west arch. It follows that all the work on the mosaics in S. Vitale was interrupted at the same point, after the mosaics of the apse had been finished. Work was resumed somewhat later with slightly different materials, although at least in the medallions of the west arch it continued the program's original plan (Fig. 3). The boundary between the two original phases runs horizontally around the sanctuary at about the level of the springing of the vault, so that it separates the vault and the north and south tympana from everything beneath them, including the panels of the Evangelists that flank the two *triforae*[20]. Many smaller divisions in the mosaics resulting from the distribution of work loads within the workshop should become apparent once the documentation for the cleaning and restoration is made available[21].

The figures of the two deacons in Justinian's panel display an oversimplified and linear rendition of their features that points to a lower level of technical proficiency (Figs. 17, 18). They seem inspired by real people and were set by a different hand from the dignitaries and guards. The remaining two heads, those of the bishop (Fig. 6) and of the man who appears in the background between him and the emperor (Fig. 7), are even more different. They alone are made predominantly with stone tesserae, even though they share with the deacons a technically less achieved manner, noticeable in the less careful setting of the rows of tesserae. The trained eye can readily identify the same mannerisms in both: the cheeks with similarly sagging V lines and

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[20] For a discussion of the internal progression of the work on the mosaics of S. Vitale, based on analysis of the materials used, see Andreescu-Treadgold, 1992; and *eadem*, "The Two Original Mosaic Decorations of San Vitale", *QdS: Quaderni di Soprintendenza, Ravenna*, III, 1997. For a comparable discussion of another mosaic decoration, see *eadem* (as in n. 19).

[21] Twelve foldout plates, including those with the indication of materials by categories, have already been published for the west arch mosaics by the restorers from the Consorzio Arké at the end of Cesare Fiori and Cetty Muscolino, eds., *Restauri ai mosaici nella basilica di S. Vitale a Ravenna: L'arco presbiteriale*, Ravenna, 1990.

orange accents, a sloppy rather than evenly set fabric for Maximian's brow, and the same palette used for flesh tones, which differs from that used for the deacons and everyone else in both panels. These two heads, which are real portraits, were made by the same mosaicist and at the same time.

The bishop's head is slightly smaller than those of his immediate companions, but this was probably dictated by the need to fit the inscription Maximianus into a limited space above him. Further complicating matters, the top of the neighboring deacon's head (Fig. 17), the emperor's crown (Fig. 5), and the beginning and end of the bishop's inscription have all been remade, with smaller tesserae than the ones used originally (Fig. 19). These repairs belong to a far larger restoration, recently identified as medieval and dated tentatively around 1100, that affected the main apse and modified the iconography in various details. In the imperial panels the restorers probably added the deacon's tonsure and simplified and presumably diminished the crown of Justinian, though the crown of Theodora (Fig. 11) is original[22]. This medieval repair, however, is not to be connected with the presence of the inscription, which predates it.

In spite of an extremely prominent location, the person squeezed between the emperor and the bishop, made at the same time as the latter's head, was not planned from the start. This is demonstrated by the fact that the mysterious character, unlike the others, lacks feet as well as the lower part of his garment, and further by a gap between the emperor and the bishop where this figure's white-clad body ought to be (Fig. 19). Unlike the missing feet of the generic guards in the back rows, the missing lower part of this figure, who was important enough to be placed between the emperor and the bishop, can be explained only by his having been inserted as an afterthought to the original composition. When this might have happened will be suggested below.

The differences between the heads made with stone tesserae and the others strongly suggest a last-minute change. They concern two central characters, one of whom was a controversial newcomer, Maximian, who had his name inscribed above his head to make his identification unmistakable. All this analysis points to an alteration of the original mosaic. Neither panel has been cleaned recently, and the several work loads that doubtless were necessary for the setting of these rather large scenes have not yet been identified, with a few exceptions – barely visible horizontal joins in the necks of the figures of Theodora and one of her attendants and the gold ground between the two figures to Justinian's right (Fig. 16). Yet no crude or even

[22] Andreescu-Treadgold (as in n. 18), esp. figs. 6-8.

clear seam is visible around the head of the bishop or the head of the official in Justinian's panel.

At present there are two main grounds for dating these two figures to the second phase, which was close in time to the first. One reason is the compositional oddity that represents the official in an awkwardly confined position, with no trace of a lower body and with very narrow shoulders that are out of proportion with his head and with the other figures. The second reason is the difference in materials. Stone dominates both of these figures' faces (Figs. 6, 7), instead of the glass used in the faces and hands of all the other characters (see Justinian's face in Fig. 5 and his hand in Fig. 8) and even in the hand of the bishop himself (Fig. 9)[23]. Another difference in materials, which needs to be reassessed after the panel's scheduled restoration, is in the bishop's chasuble: sections of the top part include a variety of olive green glass which is not found in the section below the arm carrying the cross. Although this may simply represent a different workload in the original phase, it could conceivably mean that some of the upper part of the bishop's body was remade in the second phase.

It seems, therefore, that the head of the bishop was replaced, but not most of his body or his hand, which is made with the same glass-paste tesserae as that used for the other hands in both panels. At the time of this alteration, the inscription Maximianus was fitted in above the bishop's head and the official behind him was carefully added, but without a lower body to correspond to his upper body because the original composition left too little room for him. These two heads, which belong to the technical vocabulary of the second phase of the mosaics, appear not to have been part of the original mosaic surface, and the same is true of the inscription.

Although many scholars have told us in detail what these mosaics mean, few have tried to guess who the figures in them are – apart from Justinian, Theodora, and the ostentatiously labeled Maximian. Admittedly, Justinian's guards and Theodora's eunuchs and ladies-in-waiting are generic figures, included in order to show the imperial pair with suitable attendants. That was only natural, because most people in Ravenna would have neither known nor cared about the servants and guards who actually waited on the emperor and empress in Constantinople. The deacons next to Maximian may have been well-known men in the church of Ravenna at the time, but we can hardly expect to be able to identify them now. Yet the four men flanking

[23] The reasons for discontinuing the use of glass paste for flesh tones in the second phase are still not clear, but one possibility is that the white and pale-colored glass was more expensive than stone.

Justinian and the two women next to Theodora should have been quite prominent, as Maximian was, and of high rank, as their court dress and proximity to the rulers demonstrate. Moreover, they are depicted as if they were meant to be particular people, with recognizable features.

These six court figures appear to have belonged to a very small group of people who could reasonably be represented as close associates of Justinian and Theodora but were also persons of some consequence in Ravenna at the time. Maximian, appointed by Justinian and sent from the East, more or less qualifies. Of course, Maximian would have had special justification for being depicted in a church that he finished building and decorating – if that was what he did.

Unfortunately, we have no clearly labeled portraits for any of the leading figures of Justinian's reign – in fact, the imperial panels supply our most securely identified portraits of the emperor and empress themselves. Yet the four men and two women with them should have been important enough to give us some hope of identifying them from literary sources. For this period we have excellent accounts of events both in Italy and elsewhere in the empire composed by Procopius of Caesarea, secretary of the Italian commander Belisarius. Procopius's works are the detailed *History of the Wars*, the more candid – not to say scabrous – *Secret History*, and a laudatory description of Justinian's building activity, the *Buildings*.

Although Procopius never describes S. Vitale, in the *Buildings* he describes mosaics set up by Justinian on the vaults of the Chalce, a building that formed the entrance to the imperial palace in Constantinople. The Chalce mosaics, long since destroyed, depicted the victories in North Africa and Italy that Belisarius had won for Justinian and showed the general's return from his wars with rich spoils and the captured kings of the Vandals and Ostrogoths. In one scene Belisarius presented both the spoils and the kings to a rejoicing Justinian and Theodora, who were attended by the dignitaries of the Senate[24]. These mosaics, evidently more elaborate than the Ravenna mosaics, presumably dated from soon after Belisarius's return to Constantinople with the Ostrogothic king Vitigis in 540, when Italy seemed to have been conquered for good. It is noteworthy that besides being a general celebration of imperial power, they seem to have commemorated a specific event and particular people.

Before proceeding further, we need to date the S. Vitale mosaics, which, as we have seen, had two early phases. The first phase evidently did not include Maximian, because the technical considerations outlined above

[24] Procopius, *Buildings* 1.10.15-18.

indicate that Maximian's head and inscription were added later. Since the bishop's garb is original, the original figure was presumably an earlier bishop of Ravenna. Yet he was not much earlier, because the figure of Justinian was part of the original mosaic and was unaccompanied by any Ostrogothic king. It follows that the mosaic was put up after imperial forces entered Ravenna in 540. That narrows the possibilities for the original bishop of Ravenna to just one: Maximian's immediate predecessor, Victor.

Let us begin with the man to the emperor's right and the woman to the empress's left. As the people just following the emperor and empress in their processions, they are the second-ranking personages in the panels. One might therefore guess that they were the highest-ranking man and woman in Ravenna. For this reason they have occasionally been identified as the imperial commander-in-chief of Italy, Belisarius, and his wife, Antonina[25].

They can scarcely be another general and his wife, because from 540 to 545 Belisarius was the only Byzantine commander of Italy to hold that office by himself. Between Belisarius's departure from Ravenna in 540 and his return there in 544, Justinian divided the Italian command in several ways; the two figures to Justinian's right, however, cannot be two co-commanders, because the one at the left, a beardless adolescent, is too young to fit any of the possibilities. In 544 Belisarius was about forty-five and Antonina about sixty, ages that fit well enough with the faces[26].

In 540 Belisarius left Ravenna almost immediately after taking possession of the city, too quickly to allow a mosaic to be put up first[27]. He then stayed in the East for four years, most of them as commander of the Byzantine forces fighting the Persians. He and his wife only returned to Ravenna when they spent several months there from the autumn of 544 to the spring of 545[28]. Thus, the mosaic probably dates between autumn 544 and February 15, 545, the date of Bishop Victor's death.

This appears to have been the date when the building of S. Vitale was essentially complete. Victor did not consecrate it, however, presumably because he died before he considered it ready. It follows that Maximian contributed little if anything to building the church or to decorating its apse.

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[25] Testi Rasponi, 197 n. 2; cf. Otto Von Simson, *Sacred Fortress: Byzantine Art and Statecraft in Ravenna*, Chicago, 1948, 27.

[26] For Antonina's age, see Procopius, *Secret History* 4.41. Belisarius's age is not precisely known, but the estimate of Ernest Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, II, Paris, 1949, 284, that Belisarius was born about 500 must be roughly right.

[27] Procopius, *History of the Wars* [hereafter cited as *Wars*] 6.29-30.

[28] *Ibid.* 7.11.1 (Belisarius's arrival at Ravenna) and 7.13.19 (his departure).

Yet much of the mosaic decoration of the rest of the sanctuary should be his, because it belongs to the second phase that was apparently begun after Victor's death and can scarcely be later than Maximian's inscription and his consecration of the whole church.

If the imperial panels were originally executed between late 544 and early 545, we can also suggest probable identifications for the young woman behind Antonina and the young dignitary behind Belisarius. The young woman is particularly close to Antonina and points to her – a gesture that probably indicates a family tie, as it does in certain Roman funerary sculptures (Fig. 20)[29]. Therefore, she should be Antonina's only daughter, Joannina, as some have already suggested[30]. But it is just as likely that the young man is Joannina's recently betrothed fiancé, Anastasius. Although both Joannina and Anastasius were of marriageable age at this time, Procopius describes them as adolescents, as these two figures in the mosaic surely are[31].

Anastasius's apparent rank can easily be explained despite his youth, because he was the grandson of the empress Theodora by an illegitimate daughter. The engagement of Joannina and Anastasius, according to Procopius's *Secret History*, took place in the spring of 544, just before Belisarius and Antonina left for Ravenna[32]. Procopius reports that the young couple remained behind in Constantinople, where he is appalled to report that, though still not legally married, they began living together with Theodora's encouragement[33].

Procopius indicates that Theodora forced this engagement on Belisarius in order to gain control of the general's large private fortune, which Joannina was to inherit as Belisarius's only child. The historian declares that

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[29] The example shown, in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum (inv. 3725T), dated from 200 to 273, represents Salmat and her daughter Haqqā. For a similar but full-length mother gesturing toward her daughter, see R.-B. Wartke, "Palmyrenische Plastik im Vorderasiatischen Museum", *Forschungen und Berichte*, XXXI, 1991, 72-73, fig. 3. For other examples of gestures of kinship, see G. Ploug, *Catalogue of the Palmyrene Sculptures: Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek*, Copenhagen, 1995, updating H. Ingholt, *Studier over Palmyrensk Skulptur*, Copenhagen, 1928. No study exists of gestures of kinship as such, despite a large literature on Roman portraiture; for the bibliography, see Jan Bazant, *Roman Portraiture: A History of Its History*, Prague, 1995. Many conjugal portraits show either the *dextrarum junctio* (joined right hands) or the wife placing her hand on the arm, chest, or shoulders of her husband.

[30] Testi Rasponi, 197 n. 2.

[31] Procopius, *Secret History* 5.20.

[32] *Ibid.* 4.36-39.

[33] *Ibid.* 5.20-22.

Belisarius could not object because at the time he was in disgrace. (Belisarius's offense was that he had considered the possibility of becoming emperor himself when Justinian had seemed to be dying of the plague not long before.) The general was able to regain a measure of favor only by concluding this engagement of his daughter to the empress's grandson and by agreeing to pay some of the expenses of his new Italian command out of his own pocket. Procopius represents the engagement as a concession forced on Belisarius[34].

These panels, however, put the engagement in a perspective that is somewhat different, though perfectly plausible and compatible with Procopius's account. If what Procopius says is true, even though Belisarius and Antonina did not want the marriage actually to occur and succeeded in postponing it, in 544 they needed the connection with the emperor and empress to strengthen what was then their dangerously weak position at court. Even so, most people at Ravenna must have known that at the time Belisarius had inadequate troops and funds to carry on the war, and some may have known that he had just sent a desperate letter to Justinian appealing for more men and money[35].

If the identifications proposed here are correct, one clear message of these mosaics to prominent Italians would have been that Belisarius and his wife, despite any rumors of his disgrace that might have reached Ravenna, were now very close to the imperial couple and had just made arrangements for a marriage alliance with the empress. It may even be significant that the young woman's left hand is positioned so as to display a ring, which could be the customary engagement ring[36]. Bishop Victor won his place in these prestigious panels because S. Vitale was after all his church. Victor may have felt a special need to emphasize his loyalty to Justinian and even to Belisarius, because he had been consecrated bishop under the Ostrogoths when they were already at war with the emperor and his general. Yet the main initiative behind the selection of figures for the mosaics presumably lay with Belisarius and Antonina.

As for the likenesses, the authorities in Ravenna would naturally have had on hand official portraits of Justinian and Theodora, though perhaps somewhat idealized ones. Belisarius and Antonina may well have brought

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[34] *Ibid.* 4.1-42.

[35] Procopius, *Wars* VII.12.1-11.

[36] On early Byzantine engagement rings, which were ordinarily worn only by women, see most recently Gary Vikan, "Art and Marriage in Early Byzantium", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XLIV, 1990, 145-49.

with them portraits of Joannina and Anastasius; in any case, the mosaicist has portrayed the youthful couple in a somewhat idealized fashion, types of a handsome young man and a beautiful young woman. The likenesses of Belisarius and Antonina were presumably recognizable, even if the two of them had better things to do than sit for their portraits.

The same workshop seems to have set all the faces, with a different mosaicist doing those of the deacons. This workshop, in generic figures and specific personalities alike, shows a tendency toward idealization, perhaps because it was considered appropriate for the imperial court. Less idealization appears in the faces of the Italian ecclesiastics, who apparently did sit for their portraits, though in Victor's case the replacement of his face has destroyed the evidence.

So much for the first phase of the mosaics, that of late 544 to early 545. The revision of the Justinian panel, with the substitution of Maximian's head for Victor's and the addition of the bust of the official to Justinian's left, must be several years later. The new work should belong to the time between late 546, when Maximian first entered Ravenna, and the midsummer of 548, when news of Theodora's death on June 28 would have reached the city[37]. While the mosaic would not of course have been taken down at the news of the empress's death, after this event mosaics including her would not have shown the existing constellation of power. They could accordingly no longer have been an appropriate vehicle for a current political message, and Maximian would have been unlikely to insert himself into them. In any case, he presumably had the alteration made in time for his consecration of the church, which can be dated to May 17, 548, at the latest[38].

Belisarius was the commander in Italy up to the date of Theodora's death. But by 547 his failure to defeat the Ostrogoths was patent. The end of his command was expected, and his authority was shaken. His influence was particularly feeble over his chief subordinate, John, always identified by Procopius as the nephew of the former usurper Vitalian. John the Nephew of Vitalian had recently made his own marriage alliance with Justinian's cousin Germanus by marrying Germanus's daughter Justina. Since his marriage, John had avoided Belisarius, acted almost entirely independently of his

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[37] See Agnellus, in Holder-Egger, 326-27; and in Testi Rasponi, 187-89. For Theodora's death, see John Malalas, *Chronicle*, ed. L. Dindorf, Bonn, 1831, 484; *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, trans. E. Jeffreys et al., Melbourne, 1986, 289.

[38] Agnellus, in Holder-Egger, 330 (choosing a reading indicating Apr. 19, 547); Testi Rasponi, 198 (with n. 15, preferring May 17, 548, because it was a Sunday, which in view of church practice at Ravenna seems more probable).

nominal commander, and probably hoped to be named Belisarius's successor, a post that Procopius later expected him to receive[39]. In early 548 John marched into Picenum, a province that may have especially attracted him because it included Ravenna, the capital of Italy[40].

The most likely candidate to be the additional official to Justinian's left is therefore John the Nephew of Vitalian. Like Maximian, John was at hand and could have sat for his portrait in Ravenna if necessary, and the realism of both portraits indicates that both men did so. Apparently Maximian, believing that John was worth cultivating, included him among the figures close to the emperor when altering the mosaic. Though there was not much room for John, at least his position in the panel was a prestigious one, between the emperor and the bishop.

In altering the mosaic Maximian's main purpose was doubtless to promote his own authority in Ravenna. That authority was then insecure, since the archbishop had recently been barred from entering the city because its citizens objected to his support for Justinian's Edict of the Three Chapters[41]. This mosaic, after he had altered it, reminded his flock that Maximian had the backing of the emperor, the empress, and of both of the emperor's chief officers, Belisarius and John the Nephew of Vitalian. Beyond this, substituting Maximian's head for Victor's allowed Maximian to lay claim early in his tenure to a church that he had seen to completion, although it had actually been built and in large part decorated under his predecessors.

From the start, Maximian showed great energy in altering and finishing the buildings of earlier bishops. In S. Apollinare in Classe, for instance, he radically changed the original program of mosaic decoration and had the present mosaics finished quite quickly[42]. Before beginning several

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[39] On John's marriage and estrangement from Belisarius, see Procopius, *Secret History* 5.7-15, and *Wars* 7.12.11. Cf. *Wars* 7.34.41, where John is put in command of an army headed for Italy in 549, *Wars* 7.40.10, where he is again put in command of an army headed for Italy in 550, and *Wars* 8.31.4-9, describing how John was about to lead an army to Italy in 551 until, to Procopius's surprise, Justinian chose Narses, apparently on the grounds that the other Byzantine commanders would be unwilling to obey John. Procopius expresses admiration for John in *Wars* 6.10.9-10.

[40] Procopius, *Wars* 7.30.15-17.

[41] Agnellus, in Holder-Egger, 326-27; and in Testi Rasponi, 187-89. The edict, an attempt that the emperor made in 544 to compromise with the eastern Monophysites, was generally unpopular in anti-Monophysite Italy.

[42] Giuseppe Bovini, "Qualche nota sulle sinopie recentemente rinvenute sotto il mosaico absidale di S. Apollinare in Classe di Ravenna", in *Atti della*

buildings that were entirely his own, he also completed the Tricoli, a hall in the episcopal palace begun under his five predecessors, which he decorated with mosaics depicting all six of its builders, including himself, and describing their deeds in verse[43].

Our revised chronology for the mosaics also solves a puzzle that tantalized Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, perhaps the most serious researcher on late ancient Ravenna in general, during the more than twenty-five years that separate his first and last contributions on the subject. While noting the presence of two different styles in the mosaics of San Vitale, Deichmann was unable to distinguish them chronologically, because the presence of the portrait of the consecrating bishop Maximian in the apse, which was obviously the first section to be decorated, seemed to date the entire decoration to the period of Maximian's episcopate before his consecration of the church. The only solution Deichmann could propose was that the style of the mosaics changed with the "mode" of the subject they represented. Such theories of "modes" were popular a generation ago and have their proponents even today. At least in the case of San Vitale, however, the evidence fails to support them[44].

If these dates and identifications are correct, we can see that the panels' political meaning is not simply the celebration of Byzantine autocracy that has often been supposed. In fact, Byzantine autocracy was faring quite badly in Italy in both 544 and 548, when the Ostrogoths held most of the peninsula and Ravenna was almost an isolated imperial outpost. The mosaics, however, were not really meant for Justinian and Theodora, who were never expected to see them and never did. They were meant to impress any Italians, Byzantines, and Ostrogoths who saw them with the close connections between Belisarius and Antonina and the emperor and empress, who after all remained powers to be reckoned with.

The panels may be compared to a modern photograph or videotape of an American president standing beside candidates of his party who face a difficult election campaign. The point is not so much to emphasize the great

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Accademia delle Scienze dell'Istituto di Bologna, Classe di Scienze Morali: Rendiconti, LXI, 1972-73, 1-13; Deichmann, 245-47.

[43] Agnellus, in Holder-Egger, 328-29; and in Testi Rasponi, 193.

[44] Deichmann, "Gründung und Datierung von San Vitale in Ravenna", in *Arte del Primo Millenio: 2 Congrès International pour l'Étude du Haut Moyen Age: Pavia 1950*, Turin, 1953, 111-17; *idem*, 188-90. For a reassessment of the S. Vitale mosaic workshop and a refutation of the theory of "modes" as applied here, see Andreescu-Treadgold, 1992; and *eadem*, 1997 (as in n. 20).

man's authority, which is taken for granted, but rather to show that his loyal but embattled subordinates enjoy his favor, and can count on his help and support. The ones who are likely to make most use of such images are those who are in a fairly weak position and whose support from their patron is actually in doubt. And so it was in 544 and 545 with the position of Belisarius in Italy and, indeed, with the emperor's hold on the peninsula. In a similar way, emperors often celebrated lavish triumphs specifically to disguise their military weakness[45].

At this date Belisarius and Antonina needed all the help such an image could give them, and they presumably arranged with Victor to have their portraits included in the panels. Later, Maximian and John the Nephew of Vitalian found a way to claim places in the picture for themselves as well. Although the mosaics' topical message may be difficult to decipher today, it would have been clear enough at the time to politically alert viewers in Ravenna, who could then have spread the word to others.

We see here the same mentality that so frustrates scholars confronted by the many Byzantine documents and inscriptions dated only by an indiction, a year in the taxation cycle that recurred every fifteen years. When, for example, a Byzantine recorded a death on September 10 of the eighth year of the indiction, he paid no attention to those who might wonder more than fifteen years later which indiction it had been[46]. In the same way, Belisarius would have cared more about shoring up his authority in 544-45 than about what future beholders of the mosaics might understand. Even Maximian, when he replaced Victor's head with his own and added the inscription with his name, probably cared more about impressing his contemporaries than about being remembered by posterity.

It follows that the original designer of the imperial panels did not mean to give Justinian twelve companions representing the twelve Apostles, since originally those companions numbered eleven. Nor did the designer add Maximian's inscription to give the bishop prominence in the mosaic, since his inscription was not part of the original composition and was added later to serve a different purpose. (Although we cannot be absolutely sure that

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[45] Cf. the conclusion about late ancient triumphs of Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Medieval West*, Cambridge, 1986, 79: "The timing of celebrations ... display[s] irrefutable—if surprising—links with the decline of imperial military fortunes".

[46] Cf. Cyril Mango, *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome*, London, 1980, 189. The comparison with the indiction in the context of these mosaics was suggested to us by Ihor Ševčenko.

Maximian's name was not substituted for Victor's, such a label seems out of keeping with the rest of the original panels, and Victor would probably have expected his portrait to be recognizable by itself.) Nor was the designer making any statement about Theodora's death, which was then at least three years in the future.

This being said, Kitzinger is right that the Byzantines generally accorded bishops a measure of authority independent of emperors, just as Maguire is right that the Byzantines generally accepted that the emperor was in some sense the representative of Christ on earth. The ample evidence for both propositions, however, does not really include these mosaics, which were designed with less portentous ideas in mind. Those who planned, executed, and contemplated the mosaics, while they certainly considered emperors and bishops to be important, were not particularly reminded of that importance by the bishop's inscription or by the number of the emperor's attendants.

The errors of the poststructuralist interpreters of these mosaics are more serious. MacCormack's interpretation, implying that an empress would enter heaven merely because she was an empress, gives a badly distorted picture of Byzantine ideology. Even if we discount Procopius's suggestion in the *Secret History* that Justinian and Theodora were demons in human shape, his book shows that they were widely reviled, an impression confirmed by the Nika riots of 532 that almost overthrew them[47]. The abundance of such criticisms and uprisings in Byzantine history shows how little the glorification of the imperial office contributed to respect for those who held it[48]. No Byzantine could have believed that all emperors would win salvation, because from any point of view a number of emperors had been heretics, not to mention pagans. Although many majestic depictions of emperors also appear in middle Byzantine art, middle Byzantine scenes of the Last Judgment regularly include generic emperors (and bishops) burning in Hell.

The interpretations made by Barber owe almost everything to modern scholarly fashions and barely anything to Byzantine sources. He suggests "that by naming the Bishop the designer of the mosaic has localised, both temporally and spatially, a concept of power", when we have seen that Maximian's inscription is not original. He declares, "The additional luxuriance of Theodora's crown" in comparison with Justinian's "can be

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[47] For Procopius's suggestion that they were demons, which he meant seriously, see *Secret History* 12.14-32, 18.1-4, 18.36-37, 30.34.

[48] For an introduction to some of the literature, see Franz Tinnefeld, *Kategorien der Kaiserkritik in der byzantinischen Historiographie*, Munich, 1971.

interpreted as an attempt to 'feminise' the [imperial] uniform", when we have seen that Justinian's rudimentary crown is a restoration made five or six centuries later. After further poststructuralist and feminist theorizing, he concludes that each panel "fulfils the norms" for perceptions of emperors and empresses that he has elaborately and anachronistically defined[49].

Although our findings here admittedly would have been difficult for these scholars to anticipate, the fact remains that their interpretations show a tendency that has long been popular, and has recently become even more so, to exaggerate the amount of ideology in Byzantine and late ancient thinking. We are told that ordinary Byzantines idolized their emperors and took the fulsome panegyrics of the court very seriously[50]. In this vein, MacCormack, without argument, dismisses as "misleading" the only explicit statement by a panegyrist about how serious his work was: Saint Augustine's rueful reflection that his speech praising the emperor was a tissue of lies, and known by his audience to be such[51]. Not long ago, we used to be told that the circus factions of the Blues and Greens represented political and theological opinions, until Alan Cameron laboriously showed that the factions' main interests were in sports and shows, and by extension in hooliganism[52].

If texts can be misread, art is even more susceptible to misinterpretation. Today, some scholars seem to want to believe in a Byzantium that idealized its rulers and cared above all for politics. The sources seem rather to show a society that preferred sports and shows to politics and, despite lavish spending to advertise its rulers' virtues, valued the rulers, if it valued them at all, mostly for the practical benefits they could bestow. The reality behind an idealized image of power was often weakness; attempts to glorify figures in authority often masked their actual insecurity and unpopularity. While parallels with modern times can easily be carried too far, we should realize that the people who created Byzantine works of art were not utterly unlike ourselves.

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[49] Barber (as in n. 6), 34, 36, 40.

[50] See W. Treadgold, "Imaginary Early Christianity", review of Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, and Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, *International History Review*, XV, 1993, pp. 535-45 [Study 3 in this book].

[51] MacCormack, 1.

[52] See Alan Cameron, *Porphyrius the Charioteer*, Oxford, 1973; and *idem*, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium*, Oxford, 1976.

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Fig. 1. Ravenna, S. Vitale, apse, Justinian panel

Fig. 2. Ravenna, S. Vitale, apse, Theodora panel

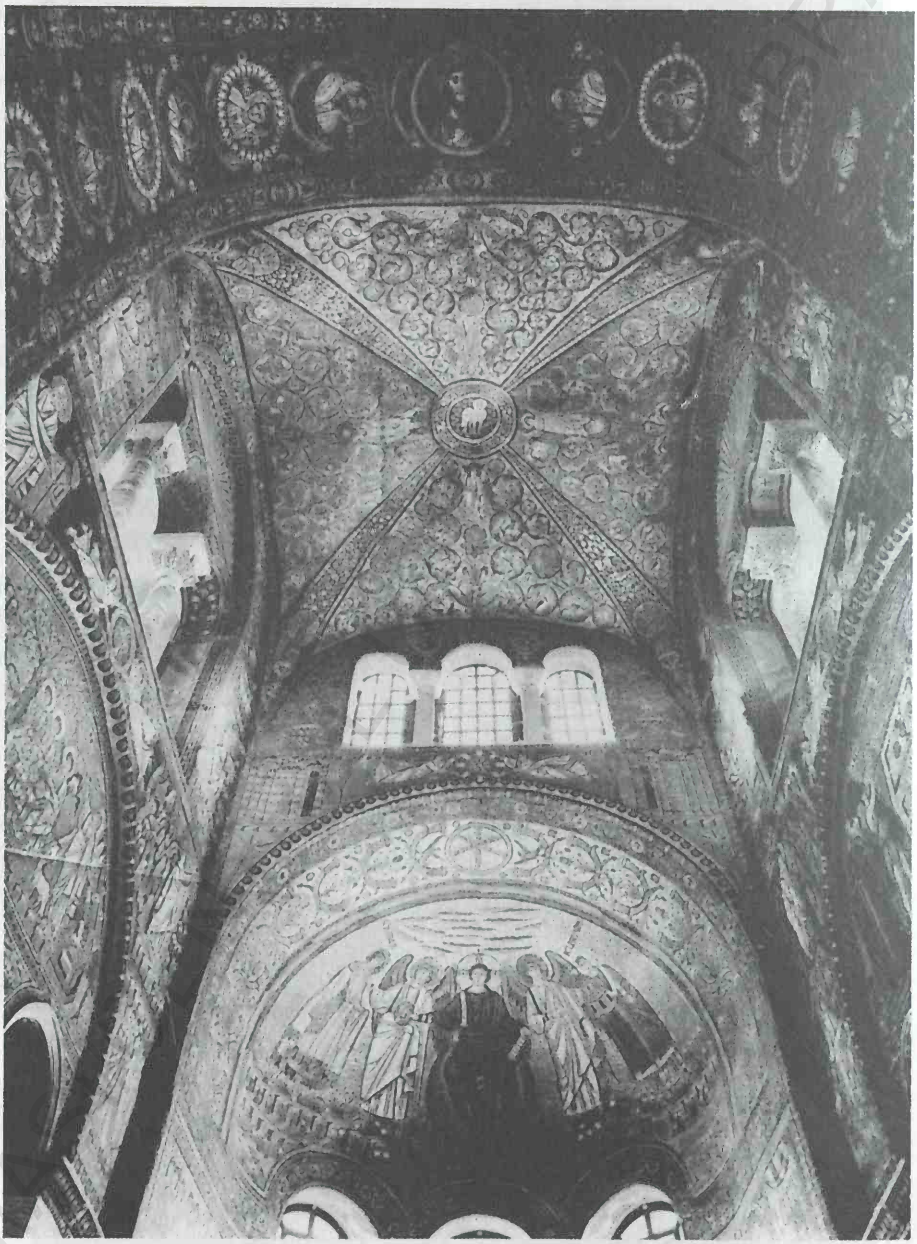

Fig. 3. Ravenna, S. Vitale, apse
(photo: Deutches Archäologisches Institut, Rome)

Fig. 4. Ravenna, S. Vitale, capital with monograms of Bishop Victor

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Fig. 5. Detail of Justinian panel: Justinian

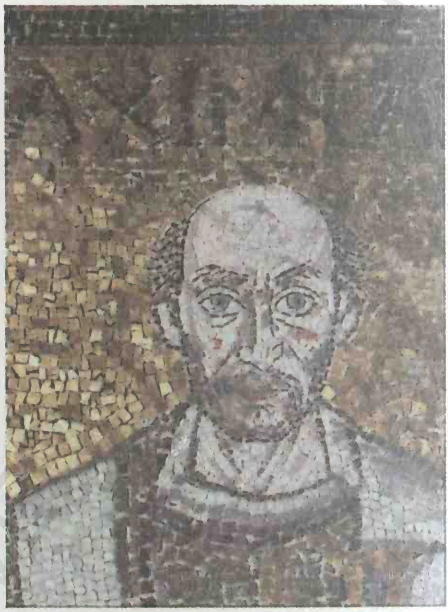

Fig. 6. Detail of Justinian panel: Archbishop Maximian

Fig. 8. Detail of Justinian panel: hand of Justinian

Fig. 9. Detail of Justinian panel: hand of Maximian (originally Victor)

Fig. 7. Detail of Justinian panel: official between Justinian and Maximian, probably John the Nephew of Vitalian

Fig. 10. Detail of Theodora panel: woman, probably Joannina

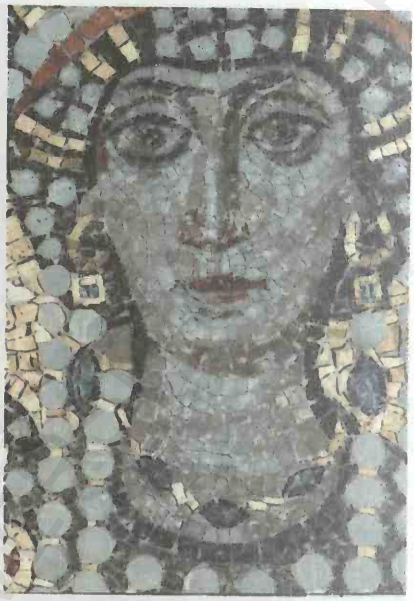

Fig. 11. Detail of Theodora panel: Theodora

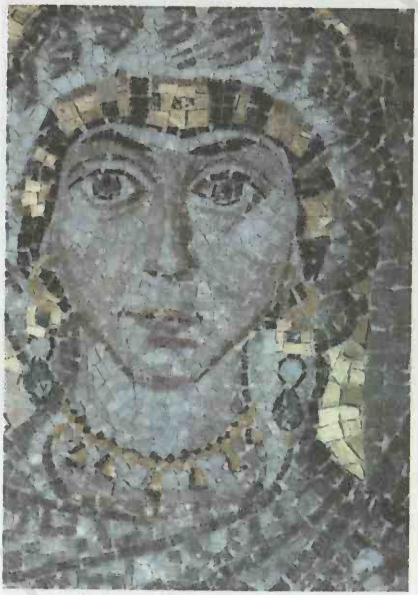

Fig. 12: Detail of Theodora panel: older woman, probably Antonina

Fig. 13: Detail of Theodora panel: eunuch

Fig. 14: Detail of Justinian panel: guards

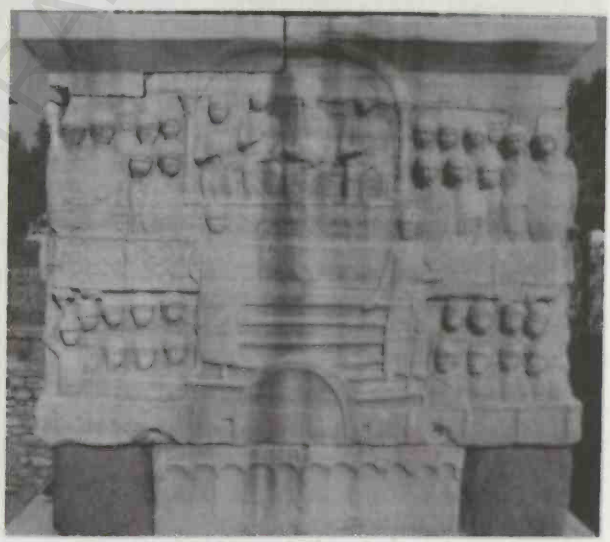

Fig. 15. Obelisk of Theodosius, base, Istanbul

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Fig. 16: Detail of Justinian panel: dignitaries, probably Anastasius and Belisarius

Fig. 17: Detail of Justinian panel: deacon

Fig. 18: Detail of Justinian panel: deacon

Fig. 19. Detail of Justinian panel: dignitaries (probably Anastasius and Belisarius), Justinian, official (probably John), and Maximian

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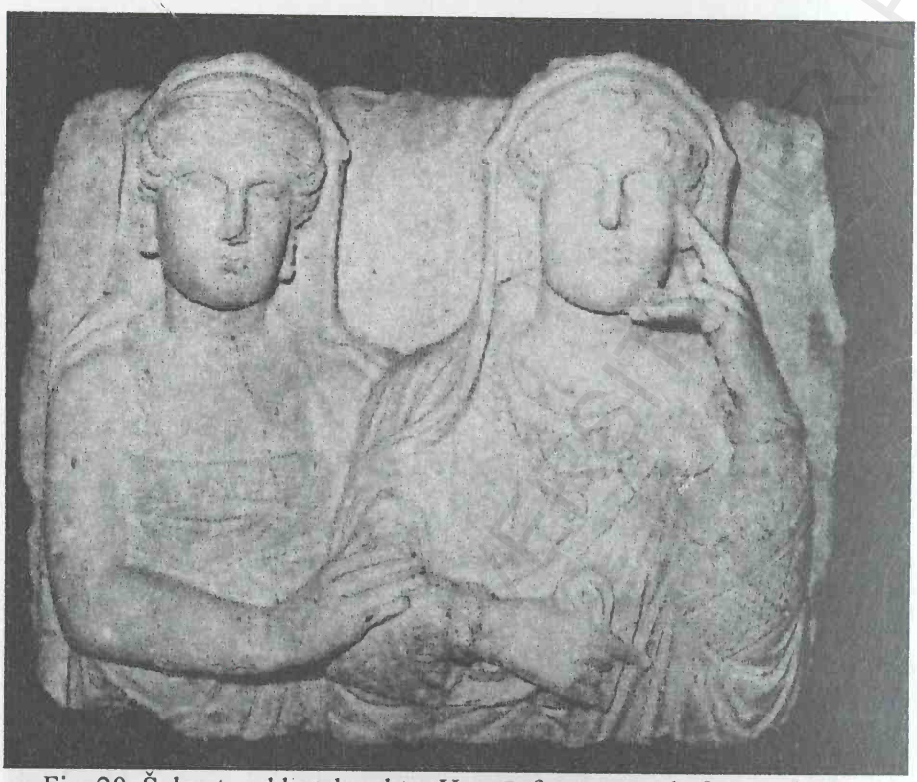

Fig. 20. Šalmat and her daughter Ḥaqqā, funerary stela from Palmyra, Istanbul, Archaeological Museum

CREDITS

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TRAJAN THE PATRICIAN, NICEPHORUS, AND THEOPHANES

No Byzantine historical work has reached us in its original state from about 630 to 780, a period to which Professor Gero has given much attention[1]. Yet, the earliest Byzantine authors of surviving histories of those years, the Patriarch Nicephorus and Theophanes Confessor, obviously had written sources. That the two of them shared at least one of those sources is clear from many parallels between their texts, though verbal differences between them show that each felt free to paraphrase his source, Nicephorus in a more elevated style[2]. Such parallels also reveal that neither Nicephorus nor Theophanes was aware of the other's work, and that each historian copied some parts of their common source that the other did not. As it happens, we know the name of just one Byzantine author who wrote a formal history between 630 and 780: a certain Trajan the Patrician[3].

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[1] For Byzantine historians who wrote before 630, see now W. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians*, Basingstoke, 2007. The present paper was written during my work on the continuation of that book, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, Basingstoke, 2013 [with p. 8-17 on Trajan]. The fact that all translations here are my own implies no criticism of Cyril Mango's excellent renderings of Nicephorus and Theophanes (see nn. 3 and 15 below).

[2] That Nicephorus paraphrased freely is evident from the uniformity of his elevated style; see C. Mango, *The* Breviarium *of the Patriarch Nicephorus*, in *Byzantium: Tribute to Andreas N. Stratos* II, Athens, 1986, p. 539-52. That Theophanes often (but not always) paraphrased freely can be seen by comparing his text with his surviving sources; see J. N. Ljubarskij, Concerning the Literary Technique of Theophanes the Confessor, *Byzantinoslavica* 56 (1995), p. 317-322. The theory that Nicephorus and Theophanes shared a common "dossier", as argued by P. Speck, *Das geteilte Dossier: Beobachtungen zu den Nachrichten über die Regierung des Kaisers Herakleios und die seiner Söhne bei Theophanes und Nikephoros* (*Poikila Byzantina* 9), Bonn, 1988 has been refuted by R.-J. Lilie, *Byzanz unter Eirene und Konstantin I (780-802)* (*Berliner Byzantinische Studien* 2), Frankfurt am Main, 1996, p. 384-408. [On Nicephorus and Theophanes, now see also W. Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 26-31 and 38-77.]

[3] A. Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650-850)*, Athens, 1999, p. 19-20, lists four "doubtful or insignificant" historians who either may or do belong to this period. One of these is Trajan. Two more, Hippolytus of Thebes, who wrote on Biblical events, and Theophanius, who wrote on the ages of man, were not historians in the usual sense. As for Kazhdan's fourth historian, the "Great Chronographer", C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor:*

I

A marginal note in the tenth-century *Suda* supplies this brief biographical sketch of Trajan, apparently by someone who had read Trajan's work: "Trajan, patrician. He flourished under Justinian [II] the Slit-Nosed [reigned 685-95 and 705-11]. [Trajan] wrote a quite wonderful *Concise Chronicle*, and was very Christian and very orthodox"[4]. If, following the convention that a man "flourished" at the age of forty, we calculate that Trajan was roughly forty when Justinian II returned to the throne in 705 (the first time Justinian reigned with a slit nose), Trajan was born around 665, with a margin for error of perhaps a decade either way[5].

Apparently citing Trajan's work, Theophanes, after recording the Goths' victory at the Battle of Adrianople in 378, observes: "Trajan the Patrician says in his history that the Scythians are called 'Goths' in the local language"[6]. This rather banal statement shows that Trajan attempted a classicizing style, because he used the archaic term "Scythians" as well as the conventional name "Goths". We also have a lead seal of "Trajan the Consul", which has been dated to the seventh century on the usual stylistic grounds. Since this seal is the only other known attestation of a Byzantine named Trajan between 641 and 867, it may well belong to our historian, who would

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Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284-813, Oxford, 1997, p. xc-xci argue plausibly that this author used either Nicephorus and Theophanes or their common source that extended at least to 769; even the latter possibility probably dates the "Great Chronographer" after 780. Note that his surviving excerpts say nothing about the years between 602 and 747, which include the whole period I believe was covered by Trajan. [See now W. Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, p. 31-35, arguing that the work was called the *Great Chronography* but its author was not called the Great Chronographer.]

[4] A. Adler (ed.), *Suidae Lexicon*, 5 vols, Leipzig, 1928-38, T 901. Τραϊανός, πατρίκιος. ἤκμαζε δὲ ἐπὶ Ἰουστινιανοῦ τοῦ Ῥινοτμήτου. οὗτος ἔγραψε χρονικὸν σύντομον, πάνυ θαυμάσιον. ἦν δὲ χριστιανικώτατος καὶ ὀρθοδοξότατος. On the marginal notes in the *Suda*, see A. Adler (ed.), *Suidae Lexicon*, vol. I, p. xv-xvi.

[5] For forty as a man's floruit, evidently established as canonical by Apollodorus of Athens in the second century B.C., see A. Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius and Greek Chronographic Tradition*, Lewisburg, 1979, p. 119-121.

[6] C. De Boor (ed.), Theophanes Confessor, 2 vols, Leipzig, 1883-1885, (cited here and hereafter by A[nnus] M[undi] and de Boor's page and line numbers in parentheses), A.M. 5870 (66.2-3): Γότθους δὲ ἐπιχωρίως τοὺς Σκύθας λέγεσθαι Τραϊανὸς ὁ πατρίκιος ἐν τῇ κατ' αὐτὸν ἱστορίᾳ φησίν.

in that case have held the rank of consul before that of patrician[7]. Patricians ranked just below the emperor's relatives in the court hierarchy of the seventh and eighth centuries, and consuls ranked just below patricians[8].

In 1882, however, Carl de Boor suggested Theophanes may have cited a different Trajan the Patrician who lived in the fourth century, while the *Suda* may have confused two historians named Trajan[9]. De Boor pointed out that a general named Trajan who died fighting the Goths at Adrianople in 378 was known for his Christian orthodoxy, in opposition to the Arianism favored by the emperor Valens[10]. De Boor argued that this fourth-century Trajan was more likely than an author writing around 700 to have said that Scythians were called Goths and to have been described as "very Christian and very orthodox".

Yet this suggestion seems unlikely. Though several sources tell us about the fourth-century Trajan, none mentions that he wrote a history or was a patrician, then an even more exclusive rank than it later became[11]. If this Trajan did write a history before 378, we should be puzzled that we first hear of him from Theophanes, writing around 814. If such a history was written sometime before 378, Eunapius of Sardis must have erred when he wrote around 397 that "the events before us [and] after the work of Dexippus", which ended with 270, had "not yet appeared in a notable narrative history"[12]. Moreover, the fourth-century Trajan would be the only general known to be an historian in all of Late Antiquity, when historians were almost all civilians

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[7] *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit, Erste Abteilung (641-867)*, 5, Berlin, 2001, (cited hereafter as *PmbZ*), no. 8510 (Trajan the Patrician is no. 8511); the same seal is listed in *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* IIIB, Cambridge, 1992; (cited hereafter as *PLRE*), Traianus 5.

[8] See N. Oikonomides, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles*, Paris, 1972, p. 293-296 (note that the intermediate rank of biconsul is first attested only at the beginning of the ninth century).

[9] C. De Boor, *Der Historiker Traianus*, in *Hermes* 17 (1882), p. 489-492.

[10] This Trajan appears in *PLRE* I, Traianus 2.

[11] See the sources cited in *PLRE* I, Traianus 2 (and Traianus 1, who may be the same man); on the rank of patrician in the fourth century, see A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, Oxford, 1964, p. 534.

[12] Eunapius fr. 1.94-95 in R.C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, vol. II, Liverpool, 1983, p. 10. For the date of Eunapius' history, see W. Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 82-83.

of low to middling rank[13]. Though the fourth-century Trajan died on active duty after a busy career, the only military officer in Late Antiquity who was certainly an historian, Ammianus, wrote almost thirty years after retiring from the army (at a much lower rank than Trajan)[14]. Finally, that three centuries apart, two men with the rare name of Trajan and the rare rank of patrician should both have been historians is scarcely credible.

Contrary to de Boor's implications, both Trajan's remark about the Goths and Scythians and his rigorous Christianity and orthodoxy could easily be ascribed to the common source of Nicephorus and Theophanes identified by Cyril Mango for the years from 668 to 720[15]. In describing Justinian II's escape from confinement in the Crimea in 704, Nicephorus says the exiled emperor went to Dorus, "which lies in the country of the Goths", and then to the Khazar Khagan, who ordered his "commander of the Scythian Bosporus" to kill Justinian[16]. These events provide a suitable context for Trajan's observation that the Scythians were called "Goths" in the "local" language (that is, of the Crimea). Such a remark would make better sense around 704, when the Goths were less familiar to a typical Byzantine reader than they had been around 378.

As for orthodox Christianity, between 668 and 720 the Monothelete heresy was still a live issue, condemned by the Sixth Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in 680-81 and revived by the emperor Philippicus Bardanes in 711-13. On each occasion both Nicephorus and Theophanes condemn Monotheletism in similar terms evidently derived from their common source[17]. Another passage in Theophanes with a devoutly Christian interpretation of the failed Arab siege of Constantinople in 718 seems also to come from that source: "And many other terrible things befell [the Arabs] at that time, so that they discovered by experience that God and the all-holy

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[13] See W. Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 350.

[14] On Ammianus, see W. Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 51-78.

[15] C. Mango, *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople, Short History: Text, Translation, and Commentary (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae)*, Washington, 1990, p. 15-17, and C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. lxxxvii-xc.

[16] Nicephorus 42.1-23 (cited here and hereafter by the chapter and line numbers in C. Mango, *Nikephoros*). The corresponding passage in Theophanes A.M. 6196 (372.23-373.10) mentions Dorus (misspelled "Daras") and the Bosporus without referring to the Goths and Scythians. On the Crimean Goths, see A. A. Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea*, Cambridge, Mass., 1936, with p. 81-87 on these events.

[17] Cf. Nicephorus 37.1-10 and 46.1-7 and Theophanes A.M. 6171 (359.25-360.7), 6203 (381.6-32), and 6204 (382.10-21).

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Virgin and Mother of God guard this city and the empire of the Christians, and that God never completely abandons those who call upon Him in truth, even if we are punished for a short time because of our sins"[18]. Then, in a passage with parallels in Nicephorus, Theophanes reports how "a tempest from God through the intercessions of the Mother of God", followed by a volcanic eruption, destroyed most of the Arab fleet on its return voyage, leaving just ten ships "by God's providence, to announce both to us and to the Arabs the mighty works of God that had befallen them. Some of our men, encountering these [ten ships] too, managed to capture five. The other five were preserved to proclaim the power of God to Syria"[19].

Moreover, the common source of Nicephorus and Theophanes showed an intimate knowledge of Constantinopolitan politics from about 695 to 720, indicating that around the time of Justinian II's reign he had access to the highest civil officials, as we would expect of a man who gained the rank of patrician. This source could describe the plotting between the general Leontius and his co-conspirators before Leontius' successful seizure of power in 695[20]. This source told in detail how the deposed Justinian escaped from exile in the Crimea with a few companions, visited the Khazars and Bulgars, and contrived to regain his throne in 705[21]. The same source gave a detailed account of how the expedition Justinian sent to the Crimea to punish his enemies ended by proclaiming Philippicus emperor, sailing back to the capital, and overthrowing Justinian in 711[22]. The source also knew specifics of the plot that blinded Philippicus and led to the proclamation of Anastasius II in 715[23]. The same source described how senior officials secretly advised Theodosius III to abdicate and elected Leo III emperor in 717[24]. This source even knew details of the failed plots to proclaim a new emperor on Sicily in 718 and to restore Anastasius II in 719[25]. While parts of these accounts may be untrustworthy because they are so obviously partisan, all look as if they

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[18] Theophanes A.M. 6209 (397.30-398.4). Though Nicephorus omits this passage, Theophanes' other main source, composed by a Christian under Arab rule, is unlikely to have referred to Byzantium as "the empire of the Christians".

[19] Theophanes A.M. 6210 (398.6-19); cf. Nicephorus 56.2-8.

[20] Nicephorus 40 and Theophanes A.M. 6187.

[21] Nicephorus 42 and Theophanes A.M. 6196 and 6197.

[22] Nicephorus 45 and Theophanes A.M. 6203.

[23] Nicephorus 48 and Theophanes A.M. 6205.

[24] Nicephorus 52.13-24 and Theophanes A.M. 6208 (390.14-26).

[25] Nicephorus 55 and 57 and Theophanes A.M. 6210 (398.7-399.4) and 6211 (400.18-401.3).

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came from the highest levels of Byzantine government when Trajan the Patrician is said to have been active.

All these facts support an identification of the common source of Nicephorus and Theophanes with the Trajan the Patrician of circa 705 described by the *Suda*. Since all modern scholars agree that Byzantine literature was at a low ebb around 700, this identification becomes even more likely when we consider that otherwise we must postulate two important historians at that time: Trajan's "quite wonderful *Concise Chronicle*" including the years 705-711 and the source shared by Nicephorus and Theophanes for the years between 668 and 720[26]. The identification is further strengthened by the resemblance of titles between Trajan's *Concise Chronicle* (χρονικὸν σύντομον) and Nicephorus' *Concise Chronography* (χρονογραφικὸν σύντομον) and *Concise History* (ἱστορία σύντομος), which look as if Nicephorus was indirectly acknowledging a debt to his predecessor. Perhaps most decisively, why would Theophanes, who copied Trajan's minor point about the Goths, not also have used Trajan's "wonderful" contemporary narrative of the late seventh and early eighth centuries? Only if we can answer that question plausibly can we suppose that someone other than Trajan was the main source of Theophanes and Nicephorus for this period.

Though Nicephorus and Theophanes have many passages in common up to the end of Nicephorus' narrative in 769, Mango must be right that they shared not just one but two sources, the first of which ended around 720. Nicephorus says nothing unfavorable about Leo III (717-41) up to 720 and then nothing more about him before 726, while Theophanes actually calls Leo "pious" during the Arab siege of Constantinople in 717-18[27]. By contrast, from 726 onward both historians denounce Leo III as an impious Iconoclast heretic in similar terms evidently derived from their second common source.

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[26] Cf. C. Mango, *Nikephoros*, p. 16: "In view of the dearth of historical writing in the eighth century a multiplicity of lost sources is, to my mind, unlikely in itself and should not be advanced without sufficient reason".

[27] Theophanes A.M. 6209 (396.7-8: ὁ δὲ εὐσεβὴς βασιλεύς). Theophanes A.M. 6211 (399.28-400.14) begins calling Leo "impious" with the baptism of Constantine V in 718/19, but this is part of a presumably legendary story that the infant Constantine defecated in his baptismal font as a sign of his future impiety, and so can hardly derive from a source written around 720. Note that Nicephorus 58 on Constantine's coronation as co-emperor in 720 corresponds to Theophanes A.M. 6212 (401.9-12), and that neither passage says anything unfavorable about either Leo or Constantine.

A terminal date of about 720 for the first common source of Nicephorus and Theophanes is fully compatible with ascribing it to Trajan the Patrician. An historian who "flourished" around 705 could surely have lived until 720. Moreover, an historian later described as "very orthodox" could hardly have praised Leo III as "pious" after 726, when Leo revealed his preference for Iconoclasm. Nor is an historian who "flourished" around 705 likely to have survived until 780, the next time iconophile opinions could be expressed openly and safely. Thus, the similar accounts in Nicephorus and Theophanes of events between 726 and 769 must derive from a continuation of their earlier source by someone other than Trajan[28].

II

Like Trajan the Patrician, the common source of Nicephorus and Theophanes between 668 and 720 showed markedly Christian and orthodox sentiments and the knowledge we would expect of a senior official under Justinian II. Even if the case that his name was Trajan is overwhelmingly probable rather than absolutely conclusive, for the sake of convenience, I shall now call him Trajan. Mango acknowledged that "the name of Trajan may be attached to our postulated Chronicle of 720", though he thought "little is to be gained by so doing"[29]. Mango assumed Trajan could only have begun his history with 668, since the assassination of Constans II in that year was the earliest event of which Nicephorus and Theophanes give similar accounts.

For the years from 629 to 668, and often earlier and later, Mango and Roger Scott, following E. W. Brooks, have shown that Theophanes' principal

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[28] Ever since D. Serruys, *Recherches sur l'Épitomé (Théodose de Mélitène, Léon le Grammarien, Syméon Logothète, etc.)*, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 16 (1907), p. 1-51, some scholars have thought Trajan the Patrician was the source of an "Epitome" that was in turn a source of the *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete. Note however that S. Wahlgren (ed.), *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae)*, Berlin, 2006, p. 118* affirms, "Hinter der Logothetenchronik steht Theophanes", as his critical edition of Symeon demonstrates; this apparently eliminates the possibility that Trajan (or anyone earlier than Theophanes) was the source of such an "Epitome". Cf. Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. xc n. 117: "It should be noted that the Epitome is itself a construct of modern scholarship".

[29] Mango, *Nikephoros*, p. 17. Cf. C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. xc, observing that to identify Trajan as the common source of Theophanes and Nicephorus is "a supposition that does not add greatly to our knowledge...".

source was a Greek translation of a Syriac chronicle used by several Eastern historians whose works survive in Syriac, Armenian, or Arabic. The author of this Syriac chronicle was a Christian who wrote under Arab rule around 750, after which his work was continued up to about 780 and translated into Greek. Mango and Scott suggest that the author was a certain Theophilus of Edessa, a Christian scholar who died in 785[30].

About the years between 641 and 668 Nicephorus says nothing at all. Because his narrative breaks off abruptly in October 641, when Constans II had just been crowned but his predecessors Heraclonas and Martina had not yet been deposed, some scholars have supposed this part of our text of Nicephorus is missing. Mango has, however, shown that we possess two editions of Nicephorus' history, of which one appears to be unrevised and stops in the middle of 713. Since both editions were evidently prepared by Nicephorus himself, and both show the same gap in coverage between 641 and 668, that gap must go back to Nicephorus. Mango concludes that Nicephorus omitted these years because he found no source for them, while Theophanes had to cover them exclusively from his Eastern source. Mango added, "From this we would have to draw the further conclusion that Trajan's hypothetical chronicle started no earlier than 668..."[31].

Yet that Trajan began with 668 is neither certain nor likely. As a rule, Byzantine historians either began with the Creation (like George Syncellus or

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[30] On this source, see C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. lxxxii-lxxxvii.

[31] C. Mango, *Nikephoros*, pp. 5-7, 14-15, 16 (with quotation on Trajan), and 25-29. Further confirmation that the gap was in Nicephorus' source seems to be provided by Nicephorus' separate *Concise Chronography*, see C. De Boor (ed.), *Nicephori Archepiscopi Opuscula Historica*, Leipzig, 1880, (cited hereafter as *CC*), p. 99, which omits Constantine III and Heraclonas, describes Constans II ("Constantine") as "Heraclius' son" and Constantine IV as "Heraclius' grandson", and assigns Constans II a reign of 28 years instead of 27, evidently including in it the ten months when Constantine III and Heraclonas reigned. This seems to show Nicephorus thought he was referring to the same "Constantine" in his chapter 33 as in his chapters 27-32, though chapter 33 actually applies to Constans II and the earlier chapters to Constantine III. Somehow Nicephorus overlooked the fact that he had recorded Constantine III's death at the end of chapter 29 (where Constantine's name must be understood from the previous sentence). A more charitable interpretation would be that Nicephorus understood the situation when he composed his *Concise History* but misunderstood it when he compiled his *Concise Chronography*. In either case, the error confirms Mango's characterization of Nicephorus as "a singularly absent-minded redactor" (cf. C. Mango, *Nikephoros*, p. 29).

George the Monk), confined themselves to one subject (like Eusebius on the Church or Procopius on the wars of Justinian I), or continued an existing history (like Nicephorus, continuing Theophylact, or Theophanes, continuing George Syncellus). A general history covering the years from 668 to 720 would fit none of these three types, unless we assume it continued a lost history ending in 668 unknown to Nicephorus, Theophanes, or us.

Trajan could surely have learned something about the years before 668. Unlike Nicephorus, who might have had trouble finding sources for events before 668 because he was born around 758, Trajan was apparently born around 665. He should therefore have been able to find at least some information about events up to forty years before his own birth, if only by talking with people of his parents' and grandparents' generation. If he had the connections we would expect of a future patrician, he should have been able to talk with important officials, and probably to consult government archives as well.

In fact, some material in Nicephorus and Theophanes that seems to derive from Trajan shows knowledge of events before 668. Theophanes, in a part of his entry for 668 that appears not to come from his Eastern source, attributes the assassination of Constans II to his exile of Pope Martin I in 655, his maiming of Maximus Confessor in 662, and his persecution of others who opposed Monotheletism, acts which made the emperor so unpopular that he fled in fear to Sicily and remained there six years (662-68)[32]. Here Theophanes may have copied the beginning of a passage by Trajan of which Nicephorus copied the end, recording that Constans reigned twenty-seven years (641-68)[33].

Moreover, both Nicephorus and Theophanes report that in 678 Constantine IV sent as ambassador to the Arabs a certain John Pitzigaudium the Patrician, described as a man distinguished by his experience, intelligence, and aristocratic birth. Theophanes refers to Pitzigaudium as "the all-praiseworthy man who has been mentioned many times"[34]. Since

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[32] Theophanes A.M. 6160 (351.15-28).

[33] Nicephorus 33.

[34] Cf. Nicephorus 34 (Πιτζιγαύδιον) with Theophanes A.M. 6169 (355.10-356.8, Πιτζιγαῦδιν); *PmbZ* 2, no. 2707. The difference between Theophanes' popular form and Nicephorus' formal version indicates that the name is neuter. The suggestion of J. B. Bury, *A History of the Later Roman Empire (395 A.D. to 800 A.D.)*, London, 1889, vol. II, p. 312 n. 5 (cf. vol. I, p. 343 n. 2) that it might be derived from an obscure term of abuse ("ass"?) is not convincing, but seems to be the only one yet ventured. Much more likely is a connection with Pitz(i)as, a Gothic noble

Theophanes has only mentioned Pitzigaudium once before, Mango and Scott must be right that these "many" references occurred in Theophanes' source[35]; and one or more of these references may well have concerned events before 668, just ten years earlier. Moreover, Pitzigaudium is described in terms that sound as if he was personally known to the historian and could thus have informed him about the period before 668.

Next, both Nicephorus and Theophanes include long backward references to the earlier history of the Bulgars, whose ruler Kuvrat died "in the times of Constantine [Constans II], who died in the West" (Theophanes says "the one in the West")[36]. Since a Byzantine historian who knew about Bulgarian history under Constans II should also have known something about Byzantine history under the same emperor, Trajan cannot have been completely ignorant of events before 668.

We know of three historians of the early seventh century whom Trajan might have continued: Theophylact, John of Antioch, and the unknown author of the "Paschal Chronicle". Theophylact's history, which continued that of Menander Protector, is preserved, and ends with 603, roughly the point from which Nicephorus continued it[37]. John of Antioch's history survives in substantial fragments and excerpts for the period up to 610; that year seems to have marked the end of John's text as it was used by Theophanes and later excerpted for Constantine VII in the tenth century[38]. The "Paschal Chronicle", which begins with the Creation, is mostly preserved in a single damaged manuscript that lacks its beginning and end. Though its last tattered pages break off in the middle of 628, the overall title is preserved just after the mutilated preface, and shows that the narrative originally ended with the first part of 630[39].

Nicephorus evidently used John of Antioch as a source for the years from 602 to 610, and Mango has postulated that Nicephorus' source for the

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who joined Belisarius in 537 (*PLRE* II, Pitzias), so that Latin Pitziae *gaudium* would mean "Pitzias' joy" (i.e., "Pitzias' beloved son"). If so, Pitzigaudium's family presumably came from Byzantine Italy and had Gothic blood.

[35] C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. 496-497 and n. 5.

[36] Cf. Nicephorus 35 and Theophanes A.M. 6171 (356.18-358.11).

[37] On Theophylact, see W. Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 329-340.

[38] On John of Antioch, see W. Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 311-329.

[39] On the "Paschal Chronicle", see W. Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 340-348.

years from 610 to 641 was a continuation of John of Antioch not available to Theophanes[40]. Though this part of Nicephorus' narrative includes a forward reference to 645, Mango suggested that the reference might have come from a later note in the manuscript[41]. If so, the reason the source ends so abruptly in October 641, before a much more logical stopping place at the deposition of Heraclonas and accession of Constans II on November 5, 641, might be that the original author was writing as events unfolded and died that October[42].

Yet few if any Byzantine historians recorded events at once, like reporters. The abruptness with which Nicephorus breaks off his narrative rather indicates that in his manuscript his source was missing its last page or two, like the "Paschal Chronicle" in our manuscript. If so, the original author probably wrote around 645 and continued his account through Constans' accession in November 641, perhaps up to the lynching of Constans' general Valentine in September 644, which left Constans in power and ended the struggle begun by Heraclius' death[43]. John of Antioch, who was more a plagiarist and continuer of the lost history of Eustathius of Epiphania than an historian in his own right, could have been as young as thirty in 610, and might have lived long enough to continue his work around 645[44]. Someone else could also have continued John's work[45].

In any case, we can eliminate the possibility that Trajan was the continuer of John of Antioch used by Nicephorus. We have seen that Trajan

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[40] C. Mango, *Nikephoros*, p. 12-14; C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. lxxxi, observe that "there is no indication that Theophanes had access to the postulated continuation [of John of Antioch] to 641".

[41] See C. Mango, *Nikephoros*, p. 14: "The reference to the disputation between Pyrrhos and Maximos (July 645) could be explained, say, on the assumption that it was mentioned in a later note appended to the MS of the source".

[42] For the date of Heraclonas' deposition and Constans' accession, see W. Treadgold, *A Note on Byzantium's Year of the Four Emperors (641)*, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 84 (1991), p. 431-433.

[43] For the date of Valentine's death, see W. Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, Stanford, 1998, p. 310 and n. 31.

[44] For John of Antioch as a virtual copyist of Eustathius of Epiphania, see W. Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 311-329 and id., *The Byzantine World Histories of John Malalas and Eustathius of Epiphania*, in *International History Review* 29 (2007), p. 709-45 [Study 9 in this book].

[45] Given that we have only short fragments of the text of John from 518 to 610 and only Nicephorus' paraphrase of the continuation, we can hardly hope to determine the identity of the continuer by a stylistic comparison.

was strongly anti-Monothelete; but Mango has demonstrated that the continuation of John of Antioch used by Nicephorus was pro-Monothelete, since it misled Nicephorus into copying its favorable treatment of the Monothelete Patriarch Pyrrhus[46]. This continuation of John is unlikely to have been further continued by the scrupulously orthodox Trajan, who would scarcely have endorsed a work he considered heretical by continuing it. If Trajan had found such a source, he would rather have rewritten it and continued some earlier history.

Of course, Trajan may not have known all three of the histories written in the early seventh century that are partly or entirely preserved today. He might also have known a history of that time that is now lost, though this is usually thought to have been a time of little literary activity. Yet, if Trajan knew the same histories that are known to us, he could have continued Theophylact from 603, John of Antioch from 610, or the "Paschal Chronicle" from 630. We should therefore look again in the text of Theophanes for material on the years before 668 that might be derived from Trajan.

III

Theophanes' chronicle has been carefully compared with other texts by Mango and Scott[47]. They have shown that, for the reign of Maurice (582-602), Theophanes used Theophylact as his principal source, supplemented by John of Antioch. For the reign of Phocas (602-10), Theophanes' main source was evidently John of Antioch, supplemented by Theophylact and the Eastern chronicle. For the part of Heraclius' reign from 610 to 628, Theophanes' sources were apparently the poems of George of Pisidia, a lost "official history" of Heraclius' Persian wars, and again the Eastern chronicle[48]. Up to

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[46] C. Mango, *Nikephoros*, p. 11-12.

[47] See C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. 409-491, especially their notes indicated with letters, for the part of Theophanes' narrative from 602 to 668. To save space here and later, I generally cite only the references of Mango and Scott, unless I have something significant to add to them.

[48] See C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. lxxxi-lxxxii (notes 11 and 12). J. Howard-Johnston, *The Official History of Heraclius' Campaigns*, in E. Dąbrowa (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East*, Cracow, 1994, p. 57-87, argues that George of Pisidia also composed the official history, which included some short poems; but his argument for the existence of an official history is much stronger than his case for its including poetry and being compiled by George.

628, nothing of any consequence seems to be left over in Theophanes' narrative that could belong to the history of Trajan.

Mango and Scott, however, found no textual parallels and suggested no source for Theophanes' entry dated A.M. 6120. If we add a year to correct the systematic error in Theophanes' chronology between 609 and 668, Theophanes' A.M. 6120 seems to correspond to A.D. 628/29[49]. This entry begins with Heraclius' setting out from Constantinople in the spring, presumably of 629, to return the True Cross to Jerusalem (though Heraclius probably set out from Hierapolis in Syria in spring 630). The entry then describes Heraclius' conversion of a rich Jew at Tiberias and states incorrectly that the emperor restored the Patriarch of Jerusalem Zacharias (who had actually died in Persian captivity). Next, the entry records how Heraclius returned the Cross to Jerusalem and visited Edessa, where he gave the orthodox Christians "the church" (presumably the church property) that had been handed over to the Nestorians (actually the Monophysites) by the Persian King Chosroës II. The entry further describes Heraclius' return to Hierapolis, where he learned of the death of the Persian king Siroës (though Kavad II Shiroë had probably died in September 628). The news of Siroës' death leads into an inaccurate list of the next five Persian rulers, ending with "Hormisdas, who was expelled by the Saracens", when "the empire of the Persians became subject to the Arabs up to the present day." However, the last Persian king was not Hormisdas (Hormizd V, reigned 631-32?) but Yazdgerd III (reigned 632/33-651/52)[50].

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[49] On this chronological error, see C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. lxiv-lxvii and W. Treadgold, *Seven Byzantine Revolutions and the Chronology of Theophanes*, in *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 31 (1990), p. 203-227 (though my remarks on pp. 206-7 on the interpolation in Theophanes' entry for A.M. 6177 were mistaken; cf. C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. 504-506).

[50] Theophanes A.M. 6120 (328.13-329.10, where the year is misprinted "6020"). Note that the same error about Zacharias under Theophanes A.M. 6118 (327.12-16) appears to come from the same source as this entry, and that the version in MSS e and m of Theophanes seems to be a (partly successful) attempt by a later copyist to correct the entry. The list of Persian rulers assigns "Adeser" seven months (correct for Ardashir II), "Sarbarazas" two months (actually just under one and a half months for Shahrvaraz), "Borane" seven months (perhaps correct for Boran), and "Hormisdas" until the Arab conquest (though Hormizd V was preceded by ephemeral rulers and was succeeded after perhaps a year by Yazdgerd III, who ruled nineteen years before the final Arab conquest). See C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. 460 n. 7.

Paul Speck found this entry difficult to analyze, but believed it was compiled from several different sources, one of which was a "chronicle of Persian events" also used by George Syncellus[51]. Though George shared many sources with Theophanes, such inaccurate material cannot have come from any source with much knowledge of Persia[52]. The entry reports events in a logical and chronological order, and appears to be derived from a single source, since if Theophanes had compiled it from different sources he would hardly have included later Persian kings in his entry for 628/29. The entry's errors, all of them unparalleled in any independent source, seem to have been made by someone who was trying to compile a narrative from inadequate sources long after the fact.

The entry's interest in Christianity (the converted Jew) and orthodoxy (the church taken from the "Nestorians" at Edessa) were features of Trajan's history, and the entry's list of Persian kings includes a forward reference extending well into the reign of Constans II, which Trajan at least mentioned. Moreover, the entry's last phrase, "up to the present day", resembles several references in material from Trajan. Nicephorus and Theophanes describe in similar terms how the Bulgarian ruler Baian or Batbaian, eldest son of Kuvrat, remained in his father's realm of "Great Bulgaria" beyond the Sea of Azov "until the present". Theophanes adds that Batbaian paid tribute to the Khazars "until now", and Nicephorus adds that Pannonia was "now" under the Avars. In a passage not found in Eastern sources, Theophanes declares that Justinian II's withdrawing the Mardaïte Christians from Arab territory in 686 caused Arab ravaging of Byzantine territory "until now". In a passage paralleled in Nicephorus, Theophanes also says that after the Arabs sacked the city of Tyana 709 it remained deserted "until now"[53].

In all these cases, Nicephorus and Theophanes seem to have been repeating their common source, who was presumably Trajan. Since Theophanes records that the Arabs built a mosque in Tyana in 806, it appears not to have been deserted then[54]. While the Arabs did still rule Persia, and the

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[51] P. Speck, *Das geteilte Dossier*, p. 157-161.

[52] See C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. lii-lxiii (on George and Theophanes) and lxviii-lxxi (on the Persian kings).

[53] Cf. Theophanes A.M. 6120 (329.9-10, μέχρι τῆς σήμερον) with Theophanes A.M. 6171 (357.21, μέχρι τῆς δεῦρο, and 358.11, μέχρι τοῦ νῦν) and Nicephorus 35.14 (μέχρι τοῦ δεῦρο) and 18 (νῦν), Theophanes A.M. 6178 (363.20, μέχρι τοῦ νῦν), and Theophanes A.M. 6201 (377.12, ἕως τοῦ νῦν; cf. Nicephorus 44.13-18, which omits the phrase).

[54] Theophanes A.M. 6298 (482.3-4).

Avars may still have ruled Pannonia when Nicephorus wrote in the late eighth century, by then no surviving Bulgar ruler could have been a son of Kuvrat, who had died under Constans II and therefore no later than 668. Yet, Trajan might have imagined Baian was about twenty in 668 and about seventy in 720 – especially because most Byzantine historians paid little attention to chronology[55]. Since few Byzantines can have known much about events in faraway "Great Bulgaria", the real date of Baian's death is probably irrelevant. Trajan evidently liked phrases meaning "until now", even if they were not necessarily accurate.

Theophanes' next entry, for A.M. 6121, is attributed by Mango and Scott, following Speck and Jan Louis Van Dieten, to "an anti-Monothelete tract based in part on Anastasios Sinaites, *Sermo III in 'secundum imaginem'*, but also incorporating other material that appears in the *Synodicon vetus* of c. AD 890"[56]. Note, however, that this "tract", unlike Trajan's history, is a hypothetical text. Theophanes' source, whatever it was, must have been earlier than about 814, when Theophanes finished writing, and later than the sermon, which Anastasius implies he wrote twenty years after the Council of Constantinople of 680-81, therefore in 701[57]. The most likely date for any anti-Monothelete text was before 726, when Iconoclasm eclipsed Monotheletism as a theological issue. This leaves time for Anastasius' text to reach Constantinople, where Trajan evidently lived, before he wrote around 720. Since Trajan was strongly anti-Monothelete, could the "anti-Monothelete tract" actually have been part of his history?

Theophanes' entry for A.M. 6121 (probably meaning 629/30) takes up the thread of the preceding entry by beginning with Heraclius at Hierapolis. There the emperor met the evil Jacobite Patriarch Athanasius of Antioch (though Anastasius of Sinai puts this meeting at Antioch, perhaps

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[55] Cf. Theophylact, *History*, ed. by C. De Boor, Leipzig, 1887, VI.10.4–18, who attributes to "some divine providence" a clerk's simple demonstration that a soldier could not have fought in a battle that occurred before he was born.

[56] Theophanes A.M. 6121 (329-332, where the year is misprinted "6021"). Cf. C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. lxxxvii, P. Speck, *Das geteilte Dossier*, p. 161-162, and Van Dieten, *Geschichte der Patriarchen von Sergios I. bis Johannes VI.* (610-715), in J. L. Van Dieten, C. Mango, P. Wirth (eds.), *Geschichte der griechischen Patriarchen von Konstantinopel* Bd. IV, Amsterdam, 1972, p. 179-218.

[57] K.-H. Uthemann (ed.), Anastasius of Sinai, *Sermones duo in constitutionem hominis secundum imaginem Dei, necnon Opuscula adversus Monotheletas (Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca 12)*, Turnhout, 1985, p. 61.107-8.

correctly). According to the entry, Heraclius agreed to recognize Athanasius as patriarch of Antioch in return for Athanasius' accepting the Chalcedonian formula that Christ had two natures, while Athanasius persuaded Heraclius that Christ had one will and one energy (the doctrines of Monotheletism and Monoenergism). The entry says Heraclius then consulted Pope John on these heresies and received John's rejection (though since John IV became Pope only eighteen days before Heraclius died in 641 this must be a mistake for Pope Honorius I [625-38]). The entry then records Heraclius' selection of Cyrus as patriarch of Alexandria (ca. 631) and of Sophronius as patriarch of Jerusalem (634). Sophronius allegedly wrote to Pope John (which again is impossible because Sophronius died in 639, before John became Pope). The entry then mentions Heraclius' pro-Monothelete *Ecthesis* and the death of Patriarch Sergius I of Constantinople (both in 638) before the death of Heraclius (641)[58].

The entry goes on to describe the poisoning of Constantine III by the new Patriarch Pyrrhus and the empress Martina (which is probably a calumny), the senate's deposition of Pyrrhus, Martina, and Heraclonas, and the accession of Constans II (all in 641). The entry continues with the condemnation of Monotheletism in the West and the arrival of the deposed Patriarch Pyrrhus in Africa, where Maximus Confessor convinced him Monotheletism was wrong (in 645). Then the entry tells how Pyrrhus relapsed into his heresy, returned to Constantinople, became patriarch again (in 654), and was condemned at an anti-Monothelete council under Pope Martin I, which is correctly dated to 649 (before Pyrrhus relapsed into heresy, so that he was not condemned). Next the entry records Constans II's arrest, torture, and exile of Pope Martin and Maximus Confessor (between 653 and 662), and Pope Agatho's anti-Monothelete council (in 680). Finally, the entry implies Monotheletism caused the Arab onslaught, "which did not abate until the persecutor of the Church [Constans II] was miserably killed in Sicily" in 668[59].

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[58] See the notes in C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, pp. 462-463, 469 n. 1 (Sophronius' consecration) and 472 n. 2 (Sophronius' death). John IV became Pope on December 24, 640, and Heraclius probably died on January 11, 641 (see W. Treadgold, *Note*); even if we adopt the alternative death date of February 11, Heraclius still had no time to receive a reply from John.

[59] See the notes in C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, pp. 462-463, 474 n. 2 (Constantine III's death), 484 n. 2 (Maximus' punishment), and 485 n. 4 (Martin's punishment).

This entry, though strongly anti-Monothelete, appears to belong to a history, not a tract. By beginning with Heraclius' sojourn at Hierapolis, it dovetails with Theophanes' immediately preceding entry and resembles it in several ways. Like its predecessor, this entry seems to have been compiled as a whole, beginning with events that belong to its year but going on to describe their consequences many years later, in the period known to have been covered by Trajan. The entry, like the preceding one, is full of errors, particularly in chronology, as if the author had tried to piece together events long after they had occurred. Most of the errors are unparalleled in independent sources, though some are in Anastasius of Sinai, the author's main but not exclusive source. These entries for A.M. 6120 and 6121 complement each other, with the first summarizing events in Syria and the East up to the Arab conquest of Persia, and the second summarizing events in Constantinople and the West up to the death of Constans. Between them they provide an overview of events from 629 until Trajan's more detailed account began with 668. The sentiments of both entries can fairly be described as "very Christian and very orthodox".

Though between them these entries extend to 668, they seem to be related to parts of seven of Theophanes' entries between 631 and 668 that lack parallels in Eastern sources. The first such passage appears under A.M. 6123 (presumably 631/32), and refers to a Persian civil war and an embassy to Heraclius from the "king of India" congratulating him on his victory over the Persians[60]. Though Speck attributed the part on the Persian civil war to the supposed "chronicle of Persian events" and the part on the Indian embassy to an "unknown encomium of Heraclius", the two seem related to each other, and to the list of Persian kings under A.M. 6120[61]. The connection with that list is even clearer for the part of Theophanes' entry for A.M. 6131 (presumably 639/40) that describes how the Arabs overwhelmed the Persians and their king "Hormisdas", showing the list's characteristic confusion of Yazdgerd III with Hormizd V[62].

Five more passages in Theophanes without parallels in Eastern sources seem related to his entry for A.M. 6121 on the history of the

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[60] Theophanes A. M. 6123 (335.9-12).

[61] P. Speck, *Das geteilte Dossier*, p. 163-164. Note that Theophanes' date of 631/32 for the Persian civil war seems to correspond to the date for the accession of "Hormisdas", 16 (7 + 2 + 7) months after the accession of "Adaser" in mid-630 according to Theophanes A.M. 6120 (329.4-8). This was probably the true date of the accession of Hormizd V.

[62] Theophanes A.M. 6131 (341.2-7).

Monothelete controversy. Part of Theophanes' entry for A.M. 6127 (presumably 635/36) records a two-year Arab siege of Jerusalem (636-38?) before the death of its patriarch Sophronius (639), noting that he had opposed the Monotheletism of Heraclius and of the patriarchs Sergius and Pyrrhus[63]. Since Sophronius had little chance to oppose Pyrrhus, who became patriarch less than three months before Sophronius died, this mention of Pyrrhus seems to show the same chronological confusion as the earlier entry, which reports that Sophronius wrote to Pope John, who became Pope almost two years after Sophronius' death[64]. Then Theophanes' entry for A.M. 6134 (presumably 642/43) quotes an oration of Constans II to the senate that claimed Martina had poisoned his father Constantine III[65]. The oration agrees with the earlier entry on Monotheletism (and probably served as its source), but not with Nicephorus' more plausible report that Constantine III died of "a chronic disease"[66].

Still later, Theophanes' entry for A.M. 6149 (presumably 657/58) records Constans' mutilation of Maximus Confessor, while Theophanes' entry for A.M. 6150 (presumably 658/59) records Constans' exile of Pope Martin[67]. Both entries are misdated, since Constans mutilated Maximus in 662 and exiled Martin in 655, but both resemble Theophanes' entry for A.M. 6121, with its similarly confused chronology[68].

The misdating of these punishments to 657/58 and 658/59 appears to follow from the earlier account's mistakes that Martin held the Lateran Council of 649 after Pyrrhus became patriarch again in 654 and that Martin

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[63] Theophanes A.M. 6127 (339.29-32).

[64] See C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, pp. 472 n. 1 (Sophronius' death on March 11, 639) and 473 n. 1 (Pyrrhus' consecration on Dec. 20, 638), and n. 58 above (on Sophronius and John IV). P. Speck, *Das geteilte Dossier*, p. 189, attributes this passage to the same hypothetical anti-Monothelete tract as the earlier entry. Van Dieten, *Geschichte der Patriarchen*, p. 57 n. 4 seems too ready to assume (over the objections of S. Vailhé) that Sophronius opposed Pyrrhus before Pyrrhus became patriarch. Note that Theophanes A.M. 6130 (340.15-19), in a heading derived from a separate list of patriarchs of Constantinople, appears to date Pyrrhus' consecration correctly to 638/39. On Theophanes' lists of patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem, see C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, pp. lxxii-lxxiii.

[65] Theophanes A.M. 6134 (342.9-20).

[66] Nicephorus 29.

[67] Theophanes A.M. 6149 (347.7-14) and 6150 (347.21-23).

[68] See C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, pp. 484 n. 2 (Maximus) and 485 n. 4 (Martin).

was punished soon after the council. Here Theophanes seems to have been trying to resolve the contradictions in his source while overlooking the fact that this source dated the Lateran Council (October 5-31, 649) correctly to the ninth year of Constans and the eighth indiction (649/50)[69].

Finally, Theophanes' entry for A.M. 6160 (presumably 668/69) attributes Constans' death to his persecution of Martin, Maximus, and Maximus' disciples in terms so similar to the earlier entries that it evidently came from the same source[70]. Technically, this entry is misdated to 668/69, since Constans died on July 15, 668 and Theophanes' years begin on September 1; but the acts of the Council of Constantinople of 680-81 show that Constantine IV dated his accession after September 17, 668, presumably from the date when news of Constans' death reached the capital[71]. Since the entry implies that the crimes for which Constans paid the penalty included the murder of his brother Theodosius, the brief notice of Theodosius' murder under A.M. 6151 (presumably 659/60) may come from the same source, not the Eastern sources that also mention it[72].

Therefore, it looks very much as if this material in Theophanes on the years between 629 and 668, hitherto ascribed to unknown and hypothetical sources, is of a piece with the material in Nicephorus and Theophanes on the years between 668 and 720 that can be attributed to Trajan. The major difference between the earlier and later material is that the information on the period before 668 is less accurate, as we would expect from an historian writing around 720. The conclusion follows that Theophanes had access to a portion of Trajan's history covering the period from 629 to 668.

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[69] Theophanes A.M. 6121 (331.25-332.2). For the dates of the council, see Van Dieten, *Geschichte der Patriarchen*, p. 97-98. The eighth indiction began on September 1, 649, and Constans II's accession is dated from his coronation as co-emperor with Heraclonas ca. September 641 (C. Mango, *Nikephoros*, p. 192), not his accession as sole emperor on November 5 (W. Treadgold, *Note*, p. 433).

[70] Theophanes A.M. 6160 (351.14-28).

[71] See Ph. Grierson, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, vol. II.2, Washington, 1968, p. 512.

[72] Theophanes A.M. 6151 (347.25). Cf. C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. 485 note a. One other passage not marked by Mango and Scott as derived from Theophanes' Eastern source probably was derived from it, because this passage, A.M. 6159 (351.3-9), though it happens not to be paralleled in any surviving Eastern source, seems to belong with other information for the same year that does appear in the Eastern sources.

The fact that Nicephorus includes no narrative for the years between 641 and 668 has puzzled all scholars who have studied his text. The reason could be that Nicephorus used a manuscript of Trajan's history that was missing its beginning, like our manuscript of the "Paschal Chronicle." Along with its opening pages our manuscript of the "Paschal Chronicle" has also lost the name of its author; and, unlike Theophanes, Nicephorus never mentions Trajan by name. We have seen that Nicephorus may also have had a manuscript of the continuation of John of Antioch that was missing its end. The Byzantines often bound similar texts together in the same manuscript volume, arranging historical texts in roughly chronological order[73]. Perhaps Nicephorus had a single volume containing John's history and its continuation followed by Trajan's history and its continuation, lacking a folio or two that corresponded to the end of John's continuation and the beginning of Trajan's history[74]. If so, Nicephorus, whose work shows little interest in historical research, could have worked from just two manuscript volumes, the other containing the history of Theophylact[75].

Mango has suggested that Nicephorus and Theophanes used the same manuscript of their common source. In that case, since Nicephorus evidently wrote before Theophanes, if Nicephorus' manuscript was missing part of Trajan's history, Theophanes would have lacked it as well. Yet, since Nicephorus and Theophanes were unaware of each other's research, they seem unlikely to have used the same manuscript[76]. Mango's suggestion

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[73] E.g., in the tenth-century Vat. Gr. 977 the history of Theophylact is followed by Nicephorus' *Concise History*, and in the tenth-century British Library Add. 19390 a text attributed to John of Damascus is followed by Nicephorus' *Concise Chronography* and *Concise History* (C. Mango, *Nikephoros*, pp. 19-20 and 23-24). In the ninth century, Photius read many volumes containing similar works by more than one author, including a volume with lexica by seven different scholars, another with the works of three different paradoxographers, and another with works by seven Egyptian poets; see R. Henry (ed.), Photius, *Bibliotheca*, 9 vols, Paris, 1959-91, codd. 151-57, 189, and 279 (especially 536a.8-22).

[74] Here "John" presumably means the second part of John's history, which copied a history by Eustathius known to have filled two volumes; see W. Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 114 and 324-325.

[75] Cf. C. Mango, *Breviarium*, especially p. 52: "In sum, the *Breviarium* [*Concise History*] is more in the nature of a rhetorical exercise than a work of historiography."

[76] Cf. C. Mango, *Nikephoros*, p. 12: "The *Brev*[*iarium* (Nicephorus' *Concise History*)] and Theophanes, while they draw on the same source(s) for the period 668-769, are entirely independent of each other." Mango suggests "that both works were

depends entirely on a single lacuna – a missing verb shared by Nicephorus and Theophanes[77]. If both historians could overlook this lacuna, surely an earlier copyist (or Trajan's secretary) could have done the same, so that the lacuna could have appeared in two different manuscripts. Thus, Nicephorus might well have had a less complete manuscript of Trajan than Theophanes did.

Another explanation is also possible. We know that Nicephorus composed the section of his history from 602 to 641 by paraphrasing John of Antioch and John's continuer. Up to 641 Nicephorus would naturally have preferred to follow John's continuer rather than Trajan, who began only with 629 and covered the years until 668 very summarily. Since Trajan's two summaries of events from 629 to 668 seem to have begun with 629 and 630, Nicephorus may not have noticed that they said anything much about events from 641 to 668. The little that Trajan did say about the years between 641 and 668 would also have been incompatible with Nicephorus' belief that the Monothelete Patriarch Pyrrhus was orthodox, and perhaps even that Constans II was identical with Constantine III[78]. Since Nicephorus cared mostly about literary style rather than history, he may simply have ignored the material in Trajan up to Constans' death in 668.

IV

The only other significant material in Theophanes that has no parallels in Eastern sources between 629 and 668 is attributed by Mango and Scott, following Speck, to "a set of 'court announcements' recording imperial births, marriages, coronations, etc., down perhaps to 641"[79]. Such "court announcements" are often found in Byzantine historical works like the "Paschal Chronicle" and even in the Eastern sources for this period, and some probably occurred in the hypothetical "official history" of Heraclius' Persian wars between 610 and 628[80]. Several such announcements evidently appeared

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kept out of circulation for a fairly long time, perhaps until after the defeat of Iconoclasm in 843, and that communication between men of letters was not as close as we may suppose."

[77] C. Mango, *Nikephoros*, p. 206, referring to Nicephorus 49.12 and Theophanes A.M. 6206 (384.7).

[78] See above, nn. 31 (on Constantine III) and 46 (on Pyrrhus).

[79] C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. lxxxii (no. 13); P. Speck, *Das geteilte Dossier*, p. 25-50.

[80] See n. 48 above.

in Trajan's history between 668 and 720. They included Justinian II's naming the Bulgar Khan Tervel as Caesar and crowning the empress Theodora and her son Tiberius in 705[81]; the birth and baptism of Leo III's son Constantine V and the coronation of Leo's wife Maria in 718[82]; and Leo's coronation of Constantine in 720[83].

We should therefore consider the possibility that the "court announcements" up to 628 should be assigned to the "official history" of Heraclius' Persian wars, while such announcements after 628, when the Persian wars were over, should be assigned to Trajan. Theophanes includes just four such events during the years between 629 and 668. The first comes under A.M. 6122 (presumably 630/31). While this entry is mostly derived from Theophanes' Eastern source, the end mentions the births of Heraclius' son David and of Heraclius' grandson Constans II (called by his given name Heraclius) on the same day, November 7, 630, and Constans' baptism on November 3, 631. Both the births and the baptism are dated by the year of the indiction, like the coronation of Constantine V in 720 in both Nicephorus and Theophanes, and thus in Trajan[84].

Theophanes announces the consulship of Constantine III and his installation as Caesar of his half-brother Heraclonas under A.M. 6108 (presumably 616/17); but this must be wrong, because Heraclonas was not born until 626 and a papal letter shows Constantine's consulship actually occurred in 631/32. Theophanes reveals the reason for his error by dating these events to the fifth indiction, which corresponded to both 616/17 and 631/32. Evidently his source gave the indiction number, which Theophanes used to redate the announcement to the previous fifteen-year indictional cycle, as he does elsewhere in his chronicle[85]. Perhaps Theophanes considered

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[81] Nicephorus 42.58-64 and 75-77 and Theophanes A.M. 6198 (374.28-375.1 and 375.26-28).

[82] Nicephorus 56.1-2 and Theophanes A.M. 6211 (399.28-400.7).

[83] Nicephorus 58 and Theophanes A.M. 6212 (401.9-12).

[84] Theophanes A.M. 6122 (335.1-5). P. Speck, *Das geteilte Dossier*, p. 373-377, tries to redate David's birth (but not Constans') to 627 as part of his attempt to redate Heraclius' return of the Cross to Jerusalem to 628; but neither redating seems plausible. On the date of the return of the Cross (evidently 630), see n. 113 below.

[85] See Theophanes A.M. 6108 (301.16-19) and C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. 433 n. 2. For Constantine's coronation, see Theophanes A.M. 6104 (300.14-16) and C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. 430 note a. For Theophanes' habit of redating to different indiction cycles events that were dated by indictions in his sources, see C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. xcii-xciii.

it fitting that Constantine should have become consul in the same indictional cycle as his coronation in 613.

Theophanes' next "court announcements" are of the deaths of Heraclius and Constantine III, both under A.M. 6132 (presumably 640/41)[86]. Though both these deaths and the subsequent accession of Heraclonas and Martina did occur during the fourteenth indiction (640/41), as the entry says, the rest of the entry is unreliable. It reports that Heraclius died in March (though he probably died in January and surely by February) after a reign of thirty years and ten months (actually thirty years and three months). Here "ten" is probably a copyist's error for "five" (ι΄ for ε΄), which would have been right if Heraclius really had died in March[87]. Then the entry reports that Constantine III died after a reign of four months (though he barely reigned three)[88]. The same entry includes the story that Constantine III was poisoned by the empress Martina and the Patriarch Pyrrhus, which though unlikely also appears in the earlier entry on Monotheletism and the later entry with the oration by Constans II, both probably derived from Trajan's history.

Finally, under A.M. 6133 (presumably 641/42) Theophanes announces the deposition of Heraclonas, the accession of Constans, the deposition of the Patriarch Pyrrhus, and the consecration of the Patriarch Paul II[89]. This entry correctly reports that all those events occurred in the fifteenth indiction (641/42), that Paul was consecrated in October (October 1), that Paul remained patriarch for twelve years, and that Constans reigned for twenty-seven years[90]. Yet the entry wrongly implies that Paul's consecration happened after Heraclonas and Martina were deposed and mutilated (November 5), and that Valentine, the general who was Constans' main supporter against Heraclonas and Martina, was expelled along with them[91].

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[86] Theophanes A.M. 6133 (341.28-342.3).

[87] Theophanes knew the right month of Heraclius' accession, because under A.M. 6102 (298.15) he dates it to October of the fourteenth indiction. The exact date was October 6, 610 (C. Mango, *Nikephoros*, p. 174).

[88] See W. Treadgold, *Note*, for the case that Heraclius died on January 11 and Constantine III died on April 23 after a reign of 102 days.

[89] Theophanes A.M. 6133 (341.28-342.3).

[90] For the dates of Paul's patriarchate (October 1, 641-December 27, 653), see Van Dieten, *Patriarchen*, pp. 76 and 102.

[91] For the date of November 5 for the deposition of Heraclonas and Martina, see W. Treadgold, *Note*, and for the actual role of Valentine, see Nicephorus 29-32, *PLRE* III, Valentinus 4 and 5, and W. Treadgold, *History*, p. 309-310. Theophanes A.M. 6136 (343.3-5), following his Eastern source, reports the rebellion of "Valentinian" in 644 without realizing that this was the same man as Valentine.

Like the preceding entry and the other material attributable to Trajan before 668, this "announcement" seems to have been compiled from inadequate sources long after the fact, as official announcements would surely not have been. All four of these "court announcements" fit well with what we know of Trajan.

Evidently Trajan's history included the number of years of each imperial reign. Nicephorus includes such numbers for all the emperors between 668 and 720 except for Anastasius II, and Nicephorus' numbers of regnal years always agree with the numbers given by Theophanes in his entry headings and sometimes in his narrative. The same lengths of reigns (except for Constans II) appear in Nicephorus' *Concise Chronography*, which adds a length for Anastasius II's reign that agrees with Theophanes. Unlike Theophanes' lengths for the reigns of Heraclius and Constantine III, from 641 the lengths of imperial reigns common to Nicephorus and Theophanes are all correct[92].

Though Theophanes probably omitted parts of Trajan's coverage of the years from 629 to 668 because he preferred his Eastern source, this may well be a sign that Trajan's coverage was inferior. The part of Trajan's history between 629 and 668 seems to have been more superficial and less accurate than the later part, as we would expect from an historian born around 665. Even later, Trajan appears to be responsible for Theophanes' mistaken report that Constantine IV deposed and mutilated his two brothers soon after his accession in 668 rather than in 681, and that the Arabs attacked around Constantinople for "seven years" beginning in 673 rather than between 669

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[92] The lengths of these reigns are as follows: Constans II: 27 years (Nicephorus 33; Theophanes A.M. 6133 [341.28]) or 28 years (*CC* 99; cf. n. 31 above); Constantine IV: 17 years (Nicephorus 37.10-12; Theophanes A.M. 6161 [352.12]; *CC* 99); Justinian II (first reign): 10 years (Nicephorus 40.33-36; Theophanes A.M. 6178 [363.1-4]; *CC* 99); Leontius: 3 years (Nicephorus 41.31-34; Theophanes A.M. 6188 [369.31]; *CC* 99); Tiberius II: 7 years (Nicephorus 42.52-54; Theophanes A.M. 6191 [371.14-17]; *CC* 99); Justinian II (second reign): 6 years (Nicephorus 45.88-90; Theophanes A.M. 6198 [374.24]; *CC* 100); Philippicus: 2 years (Nicephorus 48.12-15; Theophanes A.M. 6204 [382.1-4] and 6205 [383.5-6]; *CC* 100) or 2 years [read 1 year] 9 months (Theophanes A.M. 6207 [386.13-14]; for the emendation, see W. Treadgold, *Seven Byzantine Revolutions*, p. 218-219); Anastasius II: 2 years (not in Nicephorus; Theophanes A.M. 6206 [383.22-25]; *CC* 100) or 1 year [read 2 years] 3 months (Theophanes A.M. 6207 (386.13-15); for the emendation, see W. Treadgold, *Seven Byzantine Revolutions*, p. 220-221); Theodosius III: 1 year (Nicephorus 52.17-18; Theophanes A.M. 6208 [386.20-24]; *CC* 100).

(?) and 678[93]. Trajan himself was probably unable to recall events as early as this, and had to rely on inadequate documentation and oral sources with fading memories.

V

Because the *Suda* provides, if only in a marginal note, a biographical sketch of Trajan that seems to show knowledge of his history, we should also consider the possibility that the *Suda* includes fragments of Trajan. The *Suda* quotes many other historical works up to the ninth century, usually not from the original texts, but from the *Excerpts* from histories made for Constantine VII[94]. The *Suda* has extracts not just from the four sections of the Constantinian *Excerpts* that largely survive today, but also from some of the forty-nine lost sections[95]. Though Trajan does not appear in the four surviving sections of the *Excerpts*, neither do at least eight other authors whom the *Suda* evidently quotes from lost sections of the *Excerpts*, Nicephorus among them[96].

Though the entries in the *Suda* for Justinian II, Philippicus Bardanes, and Anastasius II might look like possible excerpts from Trajan, everything in these entries also appears in Nicephorus' *Concise History*[97]. Because a comparison of Nicephorus with Theophanes shows that Nicephorus left out many parts of their common source, the absence of additional material in these three entries in the *Suda* indicates that they came from Nicephorus, not Trajan. While nobody yet seems to have sifted all 30,000 or so entries in the *Suda* looking for possible excerpts from Trajan, Mango has raised the possibility that such an excerpt might appear in the entry in the *Suda* for "Bulgars".

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[93] Theophanes A.M. 6161 (352.12-23) and 6165 (353.25-354.11); for the errors, see C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, pp. 492 nn. 1 and 2 and 494 n. 3, who note that the earlier entry is also mistaken that the brothers had not previously been crowned, so that it cannot simply have been misplaced by Theophanes. Perhaps Trajan was reluctant to believe that Constantine had mistreated his brothers after he had repudiated Monotheletism.

[94] See A. Adler (ed.), *Suidae Lexicon*, vol. I, p. xix-xxi.

[95] See P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin: Notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzance des origines au Xe siècle*, Paris, 1971, p. 280-288.

[96] A. Adler (ed.), *Suidae Lexicon*, vol. I, p. xix-xx (where the eight authors are marked with asterisks in her list).

[97] Cf. *Suda* I 447 (Justinian II), Φ 348 (Philippicus), and A 4027 (Anastasius II) with Nicephorus 39-40 (Justinian II), 46 (Philippicus) and 49-50 (Anastasius II).

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This entry consists of three excerpts from sources that are as usual not explicitly identified. Though the third excerpt must come from a source later than 720, since it refers to the Bulgar Khan Krum in the early ninth century, the first two read as follows:

> [1.] That the Bulgars took a liking to the dress of the Avars, changed their dress to it, and have worn it until now (ἕως νῦν).
>
> [2.] That Tervel, the ruler of the Bulgars, flourished under Justinian [II] the Slit-Nosed. The same Justinian and Constantine [IV], the son [actually grandson] of Heraclius, were tributaries of his [Tervel's]. For he [Tervel] placed flat on the ground the shield that he held in battle and the whip that he used on his horse, and he piled up coins until he covered both of them. He also placed his spear on the ground, laying out silk garments from one end to the other and to (ἐς) a great height. Having filled coffers with gold and silver, he gave them to his soldiers, filling his right hand with gold and his left hand with silver[98].

Mango has observed of the second excerpt, "It would be interesting to know where the passage comes from. Although clumsily worded, it aims at an elegant style (note, e.g., the [classicizing] ἐς), which we do not associate with the common source of Nik[ephoros] and Theoph[anes]"[99].

The excerpt's style may not be quite as clumsy as Mango suggests, since ambiguity about antecedents is common even in classical Greek literature[100]. In any case, to judge the style of a text that has reached us only In paraphrases is hazardous[101]. We know Trajan used a style elegant enough to call Goths by the classical name of "Scythians." Since the reference to Tervel dates this passage to the reign of Justinian II rather than of Constantine IV (when Asparuch ruled the Bulgars), the inaccurate reference to "Constantine the son of Heraclius" must have been added by the editor of the

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[98] *Suda* B 423.19-29.

[99] C. Mango, *Nikephoros*, p. 201.

[100] The fourth sentence can also be made a little clearer by construing παρεκτείνας with ἐσθῆτα and ἐτίθει with δόρυ, as in my translation, instead of the reverse, as in Mango's.

[101] Note that Theophanes habitually changes Procopius' ἐς to εἰς; cf. Theophanes A.M. 6024 (189.27, 190.15, 190.19, etc.) and Procopius, Wars III.13.1, 14.17, 15.35, etc. Nicephorus, despite his classicizing style (he uses the dual number in his first chapter, 1.9-10, δύο δὲ ἦστην ἀδελφώ), saw no need to use ἐς and may well have changed it in Trajan's text. Besides, the slightness of the difference between these two forms makes our texts unreliable because of the caprices of copyists (and even of modern editors).

Suda or of the *Excerpts*[102]. Dating this fragment to Justinian's reign makes it particularly appropriate to Trajan. It would fit well after the reports in Nicephorus and Theophanes of Justinian's giving Tervel "many gifts" in 705[103].

Despite its brevity, the first excerpt is also interesting, because like other texts attributable to Trajan it alludes to a condition that came about in the seventh or early eighth century and continued "until now" – the time when Trajan wrote. In the narratives of Nicephorus and Theophanes, this excerpt would fit best into their general description of early Bulgarian history, after their references to the Bulgars who became subjects of the Avars in Pannonia[104]. The fact that the *Suda* distinguishes these two excerpts from each other by beginning each of them with "that" (ὅτι) only means that they cannot belong to a continuous quotation. That they are found one after another in chronological order supports the possibility that they are quoted from the same work, because each part of the *Excerpts* grouped extracts from each writer in the order of the original text.[105]

These two fragments seem to represent details from Trajan that both Nicephorus and Theophanes considered superfluous but that the editors of the *Excerpts* and the *Suda* found interesting. Yet, when the editor of the *Excerpts* or *Suda* wanted to include material that appeared in both Nicephorus and Trajan, at least one of the two editors seems to have preferred Nicephorus. The reason may have been that, as a patriarch and saint, Nicephorus enjoyed more prestige, or that his style was thought better than Trajan's, or simply that Nicephorus' greater concision was more suitable for the short entries of an encyclopedia.

VI

By now we have quite a bit of material that can be attributed to Trajan the Patrician. While we cannot be sure that all of it derives from his history,

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[102] For Asparuch, see Nicephorus 35.21 and Theophanes A.M. 6171 (357.27-28). V. Beševliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode der bulgarischen Geschichte*, Amsterdam, 1981, p. 191-192 notes that the death of Asparuch and accession of Tervel have been dated anywhere between 691 and 704.

[103] Nicephorus 42.63; Theophanes A.M. 6198 (374.29).

[104] Nicephorus 35.17-19; Theophanes, A.M. 6171 (357.24-26)

[105] Among the lost sections of the *Excerpts* catalogued by P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme*, p. 283-284, these extracts are most likely to have come from "On Peoples" (Περὶ ἐθνῶν).

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whatever does not must have come from another source; and in this period, any other source would be hypothetical, unlike Trajan, who is independently attested by Theophanes and the *Suda*. We still have the problem that, with the possible exception of the two fragments from the *Suda* on the Bulgars, all our material from Trajan has been reworked by Nicephorus or Theophanes. Obviously much of Trajan's work has been lost, but to judge from the overlapping between Nicephorus and Theophanes, who worked independently, the two of them together probably paraphrased more than half of it. If we attribute all the possible passages to Trajan, what sort of work does Trajan's history seem to have been?

Apparently Trajan's starting date was 629 and his concluding date 720, giving his history a total span of ninety-one years. The first event he recorded was Heraclius' returning the True Cross to Jerusalem, and the last was Leo III's coronation of his infant son Constantine, though the most important recent event was the rescue of Constantinople from the Arab siege of 717/18. Trajan's history told a tale of the empire's grave lapses from virtue and orthodoxy, which brought a disastrous fall from the power and prosperity gained by Heraclius' victory over the Persians. Trajan's repetition of phrases meaning "until the present" was more than a mannerism, because one of his major themes was how sadly the empire had declined during these years.

Trajan thought the worst lapse from orthodoxy had been Monoenergism and Monotheletism, whose adoption had led to almost instant retribution in the form of the Arab onslaught. Yet, the emperors persisted in their heresy until 680, causing further depredations by the Arabs, Constans II's assassination, and the Bulgar invasion "to the shame of the Romans because of the multitude of their sins"[106]. At length the "very Christian" Constantine IV saw that the Bulgars' victory had occurred "through the providence of God", and called a council that condemned the heresy and was rewarded by true peace in 680[107]. Unfortunately, this peace lasted only until 685, when the young and stupid Justinian II became emperor. His crimes and follies led to his being deposed and exiled. His deposition set off a series of revolts that culminated in Justinian's reign of terror on his return and Philippicus' revival of Monotheletism. Worst of all was the Arab siege of Constantinople, which God finally defeated, rewarding the "pious" Leo III[108]. With the birth and coronation of Leo's son and heir, a better future seemed in prospect.

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[106] Theophanes A.M. 6171 (359.21).
[107] Theophanes A.M. 6171 (359.25-360.7); Nicephorus 37.
[108] See n. 27 above.

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The problem of determining how Trajan presented his history is complicated by the different forms in which its remains appear in Nicephorus and Theophanes. We can be fairly sure that Trajan included numbers of regnal years for each emperor, and that he dated some events by both regnal years and indictions. Thus, he dated the Lateran council of 649 to the ninth year of Constans II and the eighth indiction, Heraclius' death in 641 to his thirtieth year and the fourteenth indiction, and Anastasius II's appointment of Germanus I as patriarch of Constantinople in 715 to Anastasius' second year (Trajan's mistake for Anastasius' third year) and the thirteenth indiction[109].

Because Theophanes' annual headings always supply the regnal year, each of his entries with an indictional year in effect includes a regnal year as well[110]. Since Theophanes appears to have given the correct year for many events that he seems to have known only from Trajan, Trajan is also likely to have composed in annual entries dated by regnal years and indictions, much like Theophanes. Yet, some of Trajan's earlier entries like those for 628/29 and 629/30 included related events that happened later than the year in the entry's heading, especially when Trajan was unsure exactly when they had happened. Probably Trajan recorded no events for certain years between 630 and 668.

We should now return to the question of which earlier historian Trajan might have continued if he began with 629. Theophylact and John of Antioch, who concluded their histories with 603 and 610 respectively, can be ruled out for stopping too early. The continuation of John of Antioch to 641 or 644 would have overlapped with Trajan too much, and was too strongly pro-Monothelete for Trajan to want to continue. Though the hypothetical "official history" of Heraclius' Persian wars probably did end around 628, as a history of a specific subject and a limited time it would not have lent itself to continuation by a general history like Trajan's, which put events into a broader context.

By process of elimination, the most likely history for Trajan to have continued is the "Paschal Chronicle." It ended with early 630, just a year after Trajan's history began, and a bit of overlapping was customary when one historian continued another. The ecclesiastical histories that continued the history of Eusebius overlapped slightly with it; Agathias' history overlapped

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[109] Theophanes A.M. 6121 (331.25-332.2), 6132 (341.12-13), and 6207 (384.19-21; cf. C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. 536 n. 1).

[110] For other indictional dates attributable to Trajan, see Theophanes A.M. 6108 (301.16-19; cf. n. 85 above), 6122 (335.1-5), 6133 (342.2), and 6212 (401.9; cf. Nicephorus 58.3).

slightly with that of Procopius; and Nicephorus' history overlapped slightly with Theophylact's. The "Paschal Chronicle" was divided into annual entries dated by Olympiads, indictions, and consulships; but Olympiads and consulships had become so thoroughly obsolete by this time that Trajan might reasonably have dropped the Olympiads, retained the indictions, and substituted regnal years for the consulships. Though the "Paschal Chronicle" has an entry for every year, many of these entries are just headings without events. The author of the "Paschal Chronicle" generally avoids covering the events of several years in a single entry, often by arbitrarily distributing the material he found in his sources among different entries; but Trajan might have been more scrupulous, especially because he would probably not have realized how arbitrary his predecessor's chronology could be.

Because Trajan began his work with Heraclius' return of the True Cross to Jerusalem, misdating it to spring 629 rather than spring 630, he could hardly have found the same event correctly dated in the "Paschal Chronicle"[111]. Yet, the conjecture that the "Paschal Chronicle" ended with Heraclius' return of the Cross to Jerusalem on March 21, 630 is merely an intelligent guess; our tattered manuscript breaks off in the middle of 627/28, and the overall title reveals only that the work concluded sometime between January 22 and September 1 of 630[112]. Obviously, the chronicler would have omitted the return of the Cross if he stopped writing before news of it reached Constantinople on March 31, 630. Even if he wrote later, his interests were so focused on the capital that he might have recorded the recovery of the Cross from the Persians in his entry for 628/29 without bothering to mention the Cross's return to Jerusalem in 629/30[113].

The usual assumption that the "Paschal Chronicle" had almost no influence on other Byzantine historians depends on the apparent fact that it was unknown to Nicephorus, Theophanes, or any later writer until our one manuscript was copied in the tenth century[114]. Yet, obviously, the "Paschal Chronicle" did survive, because we have almost all of it today, and it might have been easier to find in 720 than it was after 780. Another common

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[111] See C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. 459-460 n. 3.

[112] M. Whitby, M. Whitby (trans.), *Chronicon Paschale, 284-628 AD*, Liverpool, 1989, p. xi-xiii.

[113] See C. Mango, *Deux études sur Byzance et la Perse Sassanide*, in *Travaux et Mémoires* 9 (1985), p. 105-117, especially 110-113, dating to July 630 the settlement with Shahrvaraz that secured the return of the Cross.

[114] See M. Whitby, M. Whitby (trans.), *Chronicon*, p. xiv and C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, pp. liii-liv and lxxx.

assumption, based on little more than the modern title of "Paschal Chronicle", is that its author was an ecclesiastic. Yet, his knowledge of Latin, his shaky grasp of theology, his warm admiration for the Master of Offices Bonus, and his failure to praise the Patriarch Sergius rather indicate that the chronicler was a civil official[115]. Evidently Trajan was also a civil official with friends in the bureaucracy, who may have helped him find a copy of the "Paschal Chronicle" even if just one copy existed.

As for other sources, Trajan would have used the sermon of Anastasius of Sinai already mentioned. He directly quoted some government documents, including the oration of Constans II to the senate in 642/43 and the act appointing Germanus patriarch of Constantinople under Anastasius II in 715[116]. Yet, Trajan is unlikely to have known a register of "court announcements", or he would have had a more complete and accurate knowledge of such events. Probably he had access to the state archives and used whatever he found in them by chance, since they seem to have been quite disorganized[117]. Sometimes Trajan appears to have misapplied bits of archival material. For example, the number of "up to 73,000 men" he says were drowned on Justinian II's naval expedition of 711 is obviously far too high, but may represent the total strength of the army and navy units from which the expedition was drawn[118]. Otherwise, Trajan seems to have relied on his own memory and the memories of people he knew, but not on any historical text.

VII

What can we plausibly conjecture about Trajan's life and career from the conjectural contents of his history? Our tentative birthdate of around 665

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[115] See W. Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 340-348.

[116] Theophanes, A.M. 6134 (342.9-20) and 6207 (384.19-385.4).

[117] Cf. W. Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 365 and Ch. Kelly, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire*, Cambridge, Mass., 2004, p. 117-120.

[118] Nicephorus 45.1-34 and Theophanes A.M. 6203 (377.22-378.16). The figure of "up to 100,000" given for the whole expedition by Nicephorus looks like a guess rounding up the 73,000 to include the peasants, artisans, senators, and people of Constantinople whom Justinian sent in addition to the men "from the military muster-rolls." The number of 73,000 would tally with the total of roughly 72,400 we can reach by adding the muster-rolls of all the empire's oarsmen at the time (ca. 38,400) and of the original Opsician Theme (34,000 including the Theme of Thrace); see W. Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army, 284-1081*, Stanford, 1995, pp. 64-75, especially 70-75.

for Trajan appears to be corroborated by his very limited knowledge of events up to 668. His obvious knowledge of the politics of the central government suggests he was a native and lifelong resident of Constantinople. He probably came from a well-established family of civil officials, since he wrote with respect of aristocrats and ancient lineage and looked down on people of inferior origins like the emperor Theodosius III[119]. Trajan seems to have received a good education for his time, because he pursued a career as a high official, aimed at stylistic elegance, often commended men of learning, and lamented that, by the early eighth century, "literary education was disappearing"[120].

Trajan praised the Patrician John Pitzigaudium, whom he mentioned as an ambassador to the Arabs in 678 after making other references to him that Nicephorus and Theophanes found too trivial to copy[121]. Trajan praised Constantine IV, who died in 685. On the other hand, Trajan despised Constantine's immediate successor Justinian II, whom he castigated not just for supposedly murdering all the survivors and families of his Slavic soldiers and ordering the murder of the entire population of Constantinople, but for exacting high taxes from the aristocracy and making bad appointments to the bureaucracy[122]. We might guess Trajan entered the central bureaucracy before 685, with John Pitzigaudium as his patron, but failed to be promoted under Justinian[123].

Trajan was ambivalent about Leontius, who deposed Justinian in 695, and about Tiberius III, who overthrew Leontius in 697. Trajan portrayed Leontius as forestalling Justinian's orders to murder the people of

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[119] For Trajan's respect for aristocrats, see Nicephorus 39.12 and Theophanes A.M. 6169 (355.14-19), 6186 (367.26-27), 6187 (369.11), and 6205 (383.9). For Trajan's opinion of Theodosius, see Nicephorus 50.20-21 and Theophanes A.M. 6207 (385.20-22).

[120] For Trajan's respect for education, see Theophanes A.M. 6149 (347.9-14), 6160 (351.19), and 6206 (383.29-31). For Trajan's lament over the decline of education, see Nicephorus 52.1-13.

[121] Nicephorus 34.23-31 and Theophanes A.M. 6169 (355.14-356.2).

[122] Nicephorus 39 and Theophanes A.M. 6184 (366.20-23; cf. C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. 512 n. 3), 6186 (367.15-32) and 6187 (368.15-18; cf. W. Treadgold, *Seven Byzantine Revolutions*, p. 208).

[123] The normal time to begin a bureaucratic career would have been at the age of seventeen or eighteen, on completion of one's secondary education, since tertiary education was unavailable in this period; see P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin: Notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzance des origines au Xe siècle*, Paris, 1971, p. 100-101.

Constantinople, but also as taking the advice of the monk Paul of the Monastery of Callistratus, an astrologer and Monothelete heretic[124]. Trajan thought the revolt against Leontius that proclaimed Tiberius III was a "wicked plan", but gave Tiberius credit for appointing his capable brother as his principal general[125]. Trajan went to absurd lengths to denigrate Justinian during his second reign, accusing him of executing vast numbers of civil and military officials, massacring all the people of Cherson in the Crimea (though he inconsistently records that many survived to proclaim Philippicus), and exulting when 73,000 of his own men died by shipwreck[126]. We might guess that Trajan and his associates fared more or less well under Leontius and Tiberius, but badly during Justinian's second reign.

Though Trajan must have approved of Philippicus' deposing Justinian and admitted that the new emperor was an educated man, the historian emphasized Philippicus' incompetence and perversity in restoring Monotheletism, and listed a number of those guilty of acquiescing in the heresy, including the future Patriarch Germanus[127]. Evidently Trajan neither accepted Monotheletism nor gained Philippicus' favor. Then he praised Philippicus' successor Anastasius II for promoting capable generals and learned officials, and condemned as "villains" and "criminals" the soldiers who overthrew Anastasius and installed Theodosius III[128]. We may guess that Trajan was one of the learned officials whom Anastasius promoted, and later was one of the senators who persuaded Theodosius to abdicate and elected Leo III to succeed him[129]. The praise Trajan accorded Leo (which Nicephorus and Theophanes probably toned down because of Leo's later Iconoclasm) suggests that Leo gave him his rank of patrician[130]. Trajan would have been around sixty-five when he composed his history around 720. If he lived to see Leo introduce Iconoclasm in 726, Trajan seems not to have wanted to comment on it by continuing his work.

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[124] Nicephorus 40.7-15 and Theophanes A.M. 6188 (368.22-369.7); cf. Theophanes A.M. 6203 (381.6-23).

[125] Theophanes A.M. 6190 (370.22 and 371.9-13).

[126] On Justinian's second reign, see Nicephorus 42.69-75 and 45.1-52 and Theophanes A.M. 6198 (375.3-6 and 16-21) and 6203 (377.22-379.14); cf. W. Treadgold, *Seven Byzantine Revolutions*, p. 215.

[127] See Nicephorus 46 and Theophanes A.M. 6203 (381.6-32) and 6204 (382.10-21).

[128] See Nicephorus 49-50 and Theophanes A.M. 6206 (383.29-31) and 6207 (385.18 and 386.5).

[129] See Nicephorus 52.13-20 and Theophanes A.M. 6208 (390.20-26).

[130] Theophanes A.M. 6209 (396.7-8).

The judgment in the marginal note in the *Suda* that Trajan's history was "quite wonderful" may seem overly enthusiastic to us. Yet Trajan filled an important gap in Byzantine historiography. His work provided Nicephorus with all his material from 668 to 720, and Theophanes with much of his material from 629 to 720. Trajan's attempts at a classicizing style must have encouraged Nicephorus to write his own classicizing history; and Trajan's chronological data must have encouraged Theophanes to compose his chronicle in annual entries[131]. As Trajan's account became more detailed, it may have led Theophanes to correct the discrepancy between his years of the Creation and his years of the indiction that ceases with 685 but resumes with 725, after Trajan's history ended[132]. Trajan also attracted an anonymous continuer, again used by both Nicephorus and Theophanes, whose work extended at least to 769[133]. Trajan's history presumably failed to survive in its original form because it was superseded by Theophanes, whose work was more comprehensive, and Nicephorus, whose work was more elegant. The two of them, however, preserved most of the contents of Trajan's work.

In Trajan we see another example of a tendency for Byzantine historians to avoid writing during periods of uncertainty. Most historians want to have a theme, even if that theme is disaster, and are reluctant to write when they have no idea what will happen next. Thus, the Arian controversy and the struggle between paganism and Christianity inhibited historians during much of the fourth century, until they realized Nicene Christianity would prevail. Then several historians wrote, even if they disapproved of the outcome, like the Arian Philostorgius or the pagans Ammianus and Eunapius. Similarly, the Monophysite controversy and the struggle with the Huns and Germans restrained historians during much of the fifth century, until they saw that the empire was going to survive and the Monophysite controversy had reached a stalemate. Then several historians wrote, even though neither side was happy about the unresolved controversy.

In the same way, the Persian wars of the early seventh century held back historians until Heraclius won his decisive victory in 628. Then

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[131] On the apparent absence of other Greek models for Theophanes, see C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. liii-lv, who suggest Syriac models.

[132] On the discrepancy, see C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. lxiv-lxvii and W. Treadgold, *Seven Byzantine Revolutions* (but cf. n. 49 above).

[133] C. Mango, *Nikephoros*, p. 16 and C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. lxxxviii (no. 18). [On this continuer, who was probably the future Patriarch Tarasius, see W. Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, p. 17-26.]

Theophylact's history, the "Paschal Chronicle", and probably the "official history" of Heraclius' campaigns appeared within four or five years[134]. Next, the Arab invasions put the very existence of the empire in doubt until the decisive defeat of the Arab siege of Constantinople in 718. At that point, Trajan realized that the empire was going to survive, though in a sadly reduced state, and promptly wrote a history of the intervening period. Later, the Iconoclast controversy discouraged historians again until Iconoclasm seemed to be defeated in the 780's. For the sake of a continuous historical record, we are fortunate that the years of uncertainty between 634 and 718 lasted only a little longer than living memory, and that Trajan wrote a history of them before memories had faded even more.

[134] For the dates of Theophylact's history and the "Paschal Chronicle", see W. Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 331-334 and 341-342.

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THE LOST *SECRET HISTORY* OF NICETAS THE PAPHLAGONIAN

Although the *Secret History* of Nicetas the Paphlagonian has failed to reach us in its original form, it has probably shaped our knowledge of Byzantium in the ninth and early tenth centuries more than any surviving text. Nicetas' *Secret History* seems also to have been the only Byzantine source to record an attack on Constantinople in 907 by the Rus', a subject closely related to those on which Victor Spinei has made his many distinguished contributions to scholarship. Before being lost around the end of the Byzantine period, the *Secret History* was consulted and copied by several tenth-century writers whose works survive: the anonymous author of *Theophanes Continuatus* and the *Life of Basil* (in both cases probably to be identified as Theodore Daphnopates), Joseph Genesius, Symeon the Logothete, Pseudo-Symeon, and the anonymous biographer of Euthymius, Patriarch of Constantinople. While much about Nicetas' history remains conjectural or obscure, it surely deserves more attention than it has yet received. Both its existence and its significance have only been established recently, from disparate pieces of evidence[1].

One piece of evidence is a fourteenth-century manuscript containing the church histories of Sozomen and Evagrius Scholasticus and excerpts from other works, which also describes a lost history that was apparently composed around 921. The manuscript includes three book reviews that were inserted not by the main scribe but by someone else who wrote on a page and a half that the main scribe had left blank. The anonymous reviewer first copied from Photius' *Bibliotheca* Photius' descriptions of the sixth-century church histories of John Diacrinomenus and Basil the Cilician, both now lost. Then, evidently taking Photius as his model, the reviewer added his own description of a later history that he had read himself, if only in part. The reviewer seems not to have known the name of the history's author, but to have deduced from the history's contents that he had lived under Basil I (867-886) and Leo VI (886-912) and had survived until the accession of Romanus I in December 920. The reviewer adds that the historian "also composed many other books, but later, having become (as he says) very old, residing in Heraclea Pontica,

[1] The present paper has been adapted with various changes and additions from Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke, 2013), especially pp. 134-52.

he composed two books including secular and sacred history, roughly from the beginning of the world until himself"[2].

Apparently these two books were long, because each of them contained a thousand chapters and was bound as a separate volume, though the Byzantines usually bound even lengthy works in one volume if possible. Book I covered the period from the Creation to the Incarnation, while Book II covered the years from the Incarnation to "the whole reign of Constantine [VII] Porphyrogenitus". Since the already elderly historian, writing under Romanus I (920-44), could not have known that Constantine VII would have a second reign as senior emperor after 944, the "whole reign" of Constantine presumably meant Constantine's whole first reign, from 913 to 920. Because the historian wrote about events "until himself", he seems to have finished his history soon after December 920, and perhaps as early as 921. The reviewer had been unable to find Book I of the history, which he assumed had been lost over the course of time, and the reason he was unaware of the historian's name may well be that it had appeared only at the beginning of Book I. Probably this is also the reason that the reviewer seems not even to have known the author's title for the whole "secular and sacred history", a phrase which seems to be not a title but a description. The historian must however have mentioned in a separate preface or postscript to Book II that he had written many other works, was old, and lived in Heraclea.

The reviewer must have described and criticized the contents of Book II after reading it. He says that Book II began by summarizing the Gospels in a hundred chapters, then summarized the Acts of the Apostles and the church histories of Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Evagrius. After Evagrius left off (in 594), the historian added his own account, which he continued up to his own times. According to the reviewer, the historian "describes everything else cursorily and (one might say) superficially, and lavishes most of his narrative on [denouncing] the wickedness of the Patriarch

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[2] For a description of the MS (*Baroccianus Graecus* 142), see Carl de Boor, "Zur Kenntnis der Handschriften der griechischen Kirchenhistoriker: Codex Baroccianus 142", *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 6 (1884), pp. 478-94, and *idem*, "Zur kirchenhistorischen Litteratur", *BZ* 5 (1896), pp. 16-23. Here I follow the corrected text of the anonymous review of the anonymous history in Friedhelm Winkelmann, "Hat Niketas David Paphlagon ein umfassendes Geschichtswerk verfasst?" *JÖB* 37 (1987), pp. 144-45. Cf. Photius, *Bibliotheca*, ed. René Henry and Jacques Schamp, 9 vols. (Paris, 1959-91), codd. 41 and 42, for Photius' reviews of John Diacrinomenus and Basil the Cilician, on whom see Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 168-69 and 174-75.

Photius. With this idea in mind he approaches every subject right up to [Photius'] death, and abuses the man and describes his monstrously unspeakable deeds at such length that one might suppose [the historian] had undertaken the whole remainder of his work for this very purpose. He is harsh in his style, and his language is so far from being [formal] Greek that one might suppose he is not taking it seriously and is composing his history offhand. However, one might [also] say that he is extremely learned and a consummate expert on Holy Scripture. Having completed his work in a thousand chapters, he concludes by giving the book the additional title of *Concerning New Ways of Wisdom.*"

The ambiguous language of this apparent subtitle for Book II (which could also be translated "*Concerning Novel Methods of Learning*") seems to mean that the author treated history in a manner that readers would find unfamiliar, especially if they had admired Photius[3].

I

Can this historian be identified? A plausible identification has been made with Nicetas David the Paphlagonian, biographer of the Patriarch Ignatius, Photius' rival for the Patriarchate[4]. For one thing, John Scylitzes lists "Nicetas the Paphlagonian" among those who wrote histories after Theophanes Confessor in the early ninth century; one of these histories included a "denunciation of a patriarch" that could easily refer to Nicetas' denunciations of Photius, for whom Nicetas expresses disdain in his *Life of Ignatius*[5]. Moreover, a thirteenth-century polemical treatise by the Dominican

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[3] The Greek is περὶ τῶν καινῶν τῆς σοφίας ἐπιτηδευμάτων. Both de Boor and Winkelmann prudently avoid translating it.

[4] This identification, first made by Athanasios Markopoulos, *Ἡ Χρονογραφία τοῦ Ψευδοσυμεὼν καὶ οἱ πηγές της* (diss. Ioannina, 1978), pp. 163-70, is disputed by Winkelmann, "Hat Niketas?" but has been confirmed with additional arguments by Symeon Paschalides, "From Hagiography to Historiography: The Case of the *Vita Ignatii* (BHG 817) by Nicetas David the Paphlagonian", in Paolo Odorico and Panagiotis Agapitos, eds., *Les vies des saints à Byzance: Genre littéraire ou biographie historique?* (Paris, 2004), pp. 161-73.

[5] John Scylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Hans Thurn (*Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*; Berlin, 1973), pp. 3-4. Winkelmann, "Hat Niketas?" p. 149 believes that here Scylitzes is actually referring to the *Life of Ignatius*; but Scylitzes is criticizing these works for being biased histories, and he of course knew the difference between a history and a saint's life, which was supposed to champion a saint against his enemies and could not fairly be criticized for doing so.

monk Pantaleon the Deacon cites "a chronicle under the name of 'the Paphlagonian', in which execrable and almost unheard-of crimes are related about Photius in order to condemn him"[6]. Finally, the fourteenth-century church historian Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus says that he had read a story about St. Cyril of Alexandria (died 444) "in the *Secret History* by Nicetas the Philosopher, also known as David, and by others". Strikingly, the same story – that Cyril abandoned his hostility to John Chrysostom after seeing a vision of John in heaven – appears with clear verbal parallels in the corresponding part of the chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon, which shows a hostility to Photius that probably derives from Nicetas' history, as we shall see[7].

The history described by our fourteenth-century reviewer, who was a contemporary of Xanthopulus, could appropriately have been called a "secret history". In fact, *Secret History* was probably the work's overall title, which is otherwise unknown but may well have appeared in Book I, which our reviewer failed to find[8]. Like the subtitle of Book II, *Concerning New Ways of Wisdom*, the title *Secret History* seems to mean a history that revealed previously unknown facts, particularly about Photius. The "others" whom Xanthopulus seems to identify as authors of the *Secret History* along with Nicetas may have been Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and

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[6] Pantaleon the Deacon, *Tractatus contra Graecorum errores*, Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 140, col. 557B (*chronicon nomine Paphlagonis*), slightly misquoted by Paschalides, "From Hagiography", p. 166.

[7] Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus XIV.28, Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 146, cols. 1149D-1152C (ἐν ἀποκρύφῳ ἱστορίᾳ ... Νικήτα φιλοσόφου τοῦ καὶ Δαυὶδ καὶ ἄλλων). Winkelmann, "Hat Niketas?" pp. 138-44 quotes the parallel passage from the unpublished part of Pseudo-Symeon, which was copied by George Cedrenus, ed. Immanuel Bekker, 2 vols. (*Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*; Bonn, 1838-39), I, pp. 575-76. Nevertheless, Winkelmann suggests that Xanthopulus probably meant by a "secret history" a lost "appendix" added by Nicetas to one of his two surviving works on John Chrysostom, neither of which mentions Cyril's vision. This seems much less plausible than Markopoulos' conjecture that Winkelmann rejects, because, besides forcing us to assume that Pseudo-Symeon and Xanthopulus independently discovered a minor and obscure text that is lost today, Winkelmann's conjecture requires an unlikely translation of Xanthopulus' ἐν ἀποκρύφῳ ἱστορίᾳ and cannot explain Xanthopulus' καὶ ἄλλων.

[8] This title should however not be taken as a reference to the untitled work by Procopius of Caesarea that the Byzantines sometimes called ἀνέκδοτα ("unpublished things") but is usually known in English by the modern title of *Secret History*.

Evagrius, whose histories were summarized by Nicetas according to the reviewer. Because Xanthopulus consulted those historians directly for the period until our text of his history ends with 610, he would probably have found little of independent value for his purposes in Nicetas' *Secret History*, and we should not necessarily expect to find further parallels between Xanthopulus and Pseudo-Symeon.

What we know of Nicetas David the Paphlagonian corresponds well with what we know about the otherwise unknown author of the "secular and sacred history" and of the common source of Pseudo-Symeon, Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, the *Life of Basil*, and the *Life of Euthymius*. Nicetas David, also known as "the Philosopher" and "the Rhetor", was a learned, contentious, impassioned, and eccentric character[9]. His works, some of which remain unedited, amount to around seventy-eight items, including his *Life of Ignatius*, some other saints' lives, letters, homilies, commentaries on the Bible and the Fathers, poems, and his lost *Secret History*. Nicetas therefore fits the fourteenth-century reviewer's description of an historian who had "composed many other books" and was "extremely learned and a consummate expert in Holy Scripture". According to the reviewer, this historian wrote in his old age at Heraclea Pontica in Paphlagonia, which was an oddly provincial place for a scholar to choose for his retirement unless, like Nicetas, he was a native of Paphlagonia and had property, relatives, or memories to induce him to return to it[10].

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[9] On Nicetas, on whom much remains to be said, see Paschalides, *Νικήτας Δαβίδ Παφλαγών· Το πρόσωπο και το έργο του* (Thessalonica, 1999), with pp. 253-58 on the *Secret History*, Freddy Lebrun, *Nicétas le Paphlagonien: Sept homélies inédites* (Leuven, 1997), Alexander Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature*, II (Athens, 2006), pp. 91-102 (who at p. 93 n. 5 accepts Winkelmann's rejection of the attribution of a general history to Nicetas without reconsidering the evidence), Patricia Karlin-Hayter, *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP.: Text, Translation, Introduction, and Commentary* (*Bibliothèque de Byzantion* 3; Brussels, 1970), pp. 217-19, and Romilly Jenkins, "A Note on Nicetas David Paphlago and the *Vita Ignatii*", *DOP* 19 (1965), pp. 241-47.

[10] On Heraclea (modern Ereğli in Turkey), see Klaus Belke, *Paphlagonien und Honōrias* (*Tabula Imperii Byzantini* 9; Vienna, 1996), pp. 208-16, noting on p. 209 n. 22 that in 535 Justinian transferred Heraclea along with the other cities of the province of Honorias to the civil province of Paphlagonia, though the ecclesiastical province of Honorias continued to exist. While in Nicetas' time the city was in the Bucellarian Theme rather than the Theme of Paphlagonia, a classicizing author like Nicetas would still have called himself a Paphlagonian, not a Bucellarian.

Like the historian of the "secular and sacred history", Nicetas loathed Photius, as he amply demonstrates in his *Life of Ignatius*. That *Life* also includes statements very similar in content to some in Pseudo-Symeon's additions to Symeon. For example, both the *Life of Ignatius* and Pseudo-Symeon give indignant descriptions of the blasphemies and obscenities of Michael III's drinking companion Theophilus, who dressed up as patriarch of Constantinople in order to insult Ignatius[11]. Both the *Life of Ignatius* and Pseudo-Symeon relate how Photius gained the favor of Basil I by concocting and then explicating a prophecy about the dynasty of a certain "Beclas", which Photius explained as an acronym of Basil, his wife Eudocia, and their sons Constantine, Leo, Alexander, and Stephen[12]. The *Life of Ignatius* and Pseudo-Symeon both include heated denunciations of Photius' associate Theodore Santabarenus[13]. While the *Life* and Pseudo-Symeon show no close verbal parallels, such parallels should hardly be expected if Nicetas wrote the *Secret History* that served as Pseudo-Symeon's source some fourteen years after he wrote the *Life of Ignatius* in 907.

A chapter in the *Life of Euthymius* provides us with a brief biography of Nicetas up to 909[14]. It records that Nicetas was brought up by his uncle Paul the Paphlagonian, who later became Sacellarius of the patriarch of Constantinople and abbot of the Monastery of St. Phocas in the northern suburbs of the capital[15]. After surpassing all his fellow students, Nicetas taught on his own in Constantinople and gained a brilliant reputation that reached the ears of the emperor Leo VI. Suddenly, however, Nicetas renounced teaching, gave away all his property to his students and the poor, and retired to a cavelike cell on the coast of the Black Sea, evidently by the town of Media near the Bulgarian border[16]. When the emperor, wishing to

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[11] Cf. Nicetas, *Life of Ignatius*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 105, 528B-C with Pseudo-Symeon, partial ed. Immanuel Bekker as "Symeon Magister" in *Theophanes Continuatus* (*Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*; Bonn, 1838), pp. 661.13-664.4.

[12] Cf. Nicetas, *Life of Ignatius* 565C-568C with Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 689.5-690.3.

[13] Cf. Nicetas, *Life of Ignatius* 568C-D with Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 693.14-694.13.

[14] *Life of Euthymius*, chap. 16.

[15] For the Monastery of St. Phocas, see Raymond Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin I: Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique III: Les églises et les monastères*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1969), pp. 498-99.

[16] On Media (modern Midye in Turkey), see Andreas Külzer, *Ostthrakien* (*Eurōpē*) (*Tabula Imperii Byzantini* 12; Vienna, 2008), pp. 519-22, especially 521-

summon Nicetas to the Palace in order to recognize his erudition, asked Paul where his nephew was, Paul claimed not to know. Later, however, in the middle of 907, the commander of the Theme of Thrace arrested Nicetas at Media, charged him with "fleeing to the Bulgarians", and sent him to the emperor in chains.

Leo interrogated Nicetas, who denied that he had been trying to flee to Bulgaria. He was further accused of having called himself Christ, which he also denied, explaining himself by quoting a Psalm that called all men "sons of the Most High" (Ps. 81.6 [82.6]). Leo had Nicetas flogged and imprisoned and made further inquiries. One of Nicetas' students showed the emperor a work by Nicetas that included denunciations of Leo, the Patriarch Euthymius, and the whole Church. The emperor was irate. Under further interrogation, Nicetas at first claimed that he had written nothing of the sort, but when the text was read out he was unable to deny that it was his. Prodded by a gesture from the Postal Logothete, the scholar threw himself at the emperor's feet. Leo, encouraged by Nicetas' uncle Paul and Nicetas' former teacher Arethas of Caesarea, wanted to punish Nicetas severely. With great difficulty, however, the Patriarch Euthymius managed to persuade Leo to show Nicetas mercy. Nicetas spent the next two years in the Monastery of Agathus across the Bosporus from the capital[17]. Although the preserved part of the *Life of Euthymius* says nothing more about Nicetas, its lost ending presumably explained what happened to him after 909.

We know from other sources that Nicetas had joined Arethas in vehemently protesting the fourth marriage of Leo VI in 906. On Christmas day of that year, the Patriarch Nicholas invited Nicetas to supper and asked for his help in persuading Arethas to accept the emperor's marriage, only to be rebuffed[18]. Early the next year, when Arethas did decide to change sides, Nicetas repudiated him as a traitor and an apostate. Evidently Nicetas became so disgusted with the Byzantine Church and government that he gave away his property and became a hermit. A long comment in Nicetas' *Life of Ignatius* obliquely denounces Leo for his fourth marriage and the Patriarch

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22 and plates 102-4 on the cave monastery of St. Nicholas a little outside the city. Nicetas however lived not in the monastery but in a separate hermitage.

[17] For the Monastery of Agathus, see Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins* (Paris, 1975), p. 23.

[18] The source is a letter of Nicetas himself to Arethas, ed. L. G. Westerink in Arethas, *Scripta Minora*, II (Leipzig, 1972), pp. 168-74; cf. Westerink, "Nicetas the Paphlagonian on the End of the World", in *Essays in Memory of Basil Laourdas* (Thessalonica, 1975), p. 179.

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Euthymius and the whole Church for accepting it. Romilly Jenkins has plausibly identified this passage as the text that Nicetas could not disown when it was read during his interrogation in 907, shortly after he had composed it[19]. Probably he had thought his comment was so subtly expressed that only his sympathizers would notice what he meant. Unfortunately for him, one of his students betrayed him, and after the meaning had been pointed out it was clear enough. For Nicetas to be relegated to the Monastery of Agathus for two years was not a severe punishment, because he had already become a hermit and assumed a monastic name, though he had taken no regular monastic vows. Nicetas evidently chose the monastic name of "David" in honor of the Psalmist, since he cited a Psalm during his interrogation and at some point wrote a commentary on the Psalms[20].

We know about the next stage of Nicetas' life from a damaged fragment that seems to be part of a saint's life of Nicetas himself, apparently written by one of his loyal disciples[21]. Its author always refers to Nicetas by

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[19] See the identification of this text as *Life of Ignatius* 505D-508D in Jenkins, "Note", pp. 244-47. Westerink, "Nicetas" p. 181 rejects Jenkins' identification because he thinks that what Nicetas had written should have been much more explicit; but to denounce the reigning emperor and church authorities was always dangerous, and since Nicetas at first thought he could deny what he had meant he must have written somewhat ambiguously.

[20] See Paschalides, *Νικήτας* pp. 243-44 and Lebrun, *Nicétas* p. 21.

[21] See Bernard Flusin, "Un Fragment inédit de la Vie d'Euthyme le Patriarche?" I, *TravMem* 9 (1985), pp. 119-31 (introduction, text, and translation) and II, *TravMem* 10 (1987), pp. 233-60 (commentary, with the conjecture that the fragment is from a life of Nicetas, not from the missing part of the *Life of Euthymius*, which is much more sympathetic to Leo VI and Euthymius). Flusin, "Fragment" II, pp. 254-56 seems however to be mistaken that the chronology of the text is inconsistent, because he incorrectly assumes that the "20 full months" of Nicetas' confinement in the Monastery of St. Phocas (line 18) were continuous. Since Nicetas' "testing" was in its "fifth month" at a beginning of Lent that fell in February (lines 33-34, presumably meaning February 11, 910), it began in October 909, when he was evidently taken from the Monastery of Agathus (where he had not been "tested" during the two years that began approximately in November 907). Then, after refusing the emperor's proposals and gifts (lines 1-5, a mutilated passage), Nicetas was relegated to his uncle's Monastery of St. Phocas until he was allowed to go to the Hermitage of the Archangel at the beginning of another Lent (lines 60-65, presumably meaning March 3, 911, after 16 full months at St. Phocas from November 909). Nicetas remained at the hermitage until he was forced to return to St. Phocas after the next Christmas and Epiphany (lines 65-69, evidently meaning January 6, 912), then remained there until Leo VI's death in May (lines 70-72, obviously

his monastic name of David. After Nicetas-David had completed his two years in the Monastery of Agathus, in the fall of 909 the emperor summoned him and tried to win him over, which evidently meant persuading him to accept Leo VI's fourth marriage. When Nicetas refused the emperor's blandishments, he was relegated to his uncle Paul's Monastery of St. Phocas. Though his uncle remained hostile to him, Nicetas was supported by his father and two brothers, who also suffered from the emperor's displeasure. One brother was allegedly so badly abused that he fell ill and died. Nicetas' father Andrew, who was Paul's brother and a priest, returned to his church and his wife in Paphlagonia, taking his third son Peter with him and dying there. Nicetas' loyal students had to take refuge in various places.

Nicetas remained in his uncle's monastery, where he was beaten, deprived of food, and not allowed to bathe, so that he became infested with "countless lice". The emperor soon summoned him again, offered him a high office, and tried to persuade him to marry; but Nicetas firmly refused, rejecting any marriage as incompatible with following Christ. In February 910 Leo summoned Nicetas once more and offered him a professorship of philosophy if he would pray God to forgive the emperor's sins. When Nicetas again refused, Leo slapped his face sixty times and returned him to his uncle's monastery. There the monks abused him until in March 911 his uncle allowed him to move with two servants to a hermitage attached to the monastery. After Epiphany 912 the uncle forcibly returned Nicetas to the monastery, where he remained until Leo VI died that May. Then Nicetas was released and joined his brother Peter. Although they were attacked by enemies whose identity is unclear from our fragmentary text, the new emperor Alexander (912-913) allowed the brothers to go wherever they wished. The text breaks off before telling us more about Nicetas.

Some have deduced from the *Life of Euthymius* that Nicetas was still a young man who had recently finished his studies and begun to teach only in 907, so that he was born around 885[22]. If so, Nicetas was in his mid-thirties in 921, and even by Byzantine standards could hardly be called "very old", as the anonymous historian claimed to be when he wrote. Although that historian might have written a little later than 921, he must have finished before 925 if his history was a source of the *Life of Euthymius*, which was written no later than that date. On the other hand, most of Nicetas' seventy-eight works are

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meaning May 11, 912), after 4 more full months at St. Phocas to make 20 full months (16 + 4) in all.

[22] Jenkins, "Note", p. 243 and n. 18, followed by subsequent scholars without further consideration.

ascribed to him as "rhetor" or "philosopher" and only a dozen include his new monastic name of David, as if he had done most of his extensive writing before retiring in 907[23]. This would be very surprising if he was in his early twenties at that date.

If Nicetas was born as late as 885, we should also be surprised by the detailed knowledge he shows in his *Life of Ignatius* both of Ignatius, who died in 877, and of Photius, who was deposed for the second time in 882. The last event explicitly mentioned in the *Life of Ignatius* occurred in 878[24]. If Nicetas only began to gather information on Ignatius after retiring to his hermitage in 907, his familiarity with Ignatius' long life would be hard to explain, as would his passionately held opinions about events that had happened long before he was born. Although in the *Life of Ignatius* Nicetas was evidently trying to discredit Leo VI and Leo's patriarch Euthymius by implicitly comparing them to the Caesar Bardas and Bardas' patriarch Photius, these comparisons would have seemed damning only if Nicetas felt sure that Bardas and Photius had acted atrociously in 858.

In fact, the *Life of Euthymius* neither says nor implies that Nicetas had finished his studies recently or was particularly young in 907. It rather shows that, before retiring to his hermitage and being arrested in 907, Nicetas had studied with Arethas long enough to distinguish himself among Arethas' students and had taught long enough to gain a brilliant reputation and a large following. Arethas seems to have taught from about 877 to about 890[25]. Probably he took students who had already finished their secondary education; we certainly should not assume that he was Nicetas' first teacher. If Nicetas was one of Arethas' first students, he was probably in his late teens in 877, so that he was born in Paphlagonia around 860, and might have come to Constantinople for his secondary education soon after Photius' deposition

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[23] For the MS titles of Nicetas' works, see Paschalides, *Νικήτας* pp. 123-288. Westerink, "Nicetas", p. 182 observes that the preponderance of works without the name of David in their title "might indicate that [Nicetas] took vows only later in life". In fact, Nicetas seems never to have taken formal monastic vows, probably because he was unwilling to commit himself to obey an abbot, but he evidently did renounce the world when he took the name of David. Note that the *Life of Ignatius*, probably composed in 907, is already ascribed to "Nicetas the Paphlagonian, also known as David, the servant of Jesus Christ".

[24] This is noted by Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 217-18, who thinks that the *Life of Ignatius* was originally written soon after 878 by someone else and only revised by Ignatius. While this hypothesis seems far-fetched, Karlin-Hayter's reluctance to assume that the *Life* was written by someone born around 885 is well founded.

[25] On Arethas, see Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 124-25.

and Ignatius' reinstatement in 867. As a friend and perhaps a student of Photius, Arethas could have told Nicetas a great deal about Photius and Ignatius. In fact, what Pseudo-Symeon says about Photius' parents and childhood looks very much like a pejorative reworking of an account that was originally favorable to Photius[26]. If Nicetas was born around 860, by 921 he was about sixty, which by Byzantine standards could make him "very old", especially if he was in poor health[27].

We have no clear evidence that Nicetas lived much past 921. If he was the author of the history in question, he probably finished it before 922/23, when the Papacy declared Leo VI's fourth marriage invalid, an event that Nicetas would have been delighted to record but the history did not[28]. Saints' lives could only be composed after their subjects were dead, and Nicetas' hagiographer seems to have written when memories of the events of 909-12 were still fresh[29]. A treatise and letter in which Nicetas calculated the date of the end of the world has been dated to 909/13, 942, or 950 on the basis of its obscure and dubious arithmetic; but its actual date is probably 906/7, because in the letter Nicetas says that the corruption of the Eastern Church had not affected the Western Church, as he would surely not have said after the Pope had condoned Leo VI's fourth marriage in 907.[30] We have a later report that the "godless Turks" desecrated the tomb of "the holy Nicetas the

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[26] On the connection between Photius and Arethas, see Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 124-25, and on Pseudo-Symeon's account of Photius, see Treadgold, "Photius Before His Patriarchate", *JEH* 53 (2002), p. 3.

[27] Cf. Alice-Mary Talbot, "Old Age in Byzantium", *BZ* 77 (1984), pp. 267-78. Note that the reviewer describes the anonymous writer who was "very old" ca. 921 as having lived "in the days of Basil [I] the Macedonian and Leo [VI] the Wise", as if the writer had had clear recollections of their reigns but not of the reign of Michael III (842-67), and so was born around 860.

[28] See Romilly Jenkins and L. G. Westerink, *Nicholas I, Patriarch of Constantinople: Letters* (*Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*; Washington, 1973), pp. xxvi and 539.

[29] As observed by Flusin, "Fragment" II, pp. 259-60.

[30] Westerink, "Nicetas", pp. 183-86 suggests these dates, but also admits "The scholarship of the letter is as shaky as its arithmetic". Note that the treatise and letter are both ascribed to "Nicetas the Philosopher", without the name of David that Nicetas evidently assumed in 907. The attempt by Paschalides, *Νικήτας* pp. 112-15 to identify Nicetas with the "imperial cleric Nicetas" who wrote a letter to Constantine VII after 947 seems to have nothing in its favor, especially because at least one of the many titles in our MSS would surely have assigned Nicetas that rank if he had held it.

Philosopher, who is also the Paphlagonian", 170 years after Nicetas' death. Since Nicetas' tomb was in Paphlagonia and probably at Heraclea, which was still Byzantine in 1081 and was recovered from the Turks by 1097, Nicetas presumably died before 927[31].

Nicetas' biography might therefore be conjecturally reconstructed as follows. He was born around 860 in Paphlagonia, quite possibly at Heraclea Pontica, where he later chose to retire. His father Andrew was a priest, and had two other sons. Around 870 Nicetas' uncle Paul, who might have been fifteen to twenty years older than his nephew and already launched on an ecclesiastical career in Constantinople, seems to have brought Nicetas there to educate him in a good secondary school. Around 877 Nicetas began more advanced studies under Arethas, whom he impressed by his ability. Later Nicetas himself became a distinguished teacher, perhaps taking over Arethas' school after Arethas entered the Church around 890. Nicetas continued to teach until soon after Christmas 906, when he decided to renounce the world, to give away his property, and to become a hermit in Thrace near Media under the name of David. His motive was presumably his disgust at Leo VI's fourth marriage, and at the Patriarch Nicholas' condoning it.

While Nicetas fumed in his hermitage in 907, he vented his frustration by writing his *Life of Ignatius*. In it he praised Ignatius for suffering deposition rather than accept Bardas' debauchery, and condemned Photius for being appointed patriarch because he tolerated that debauchery. Nicetas implied a comparison with those who in his own time rejected or accepted Leo VI's fourth marriage. An uncompromising moralist, Nicetas thought that men, as "sons" of God, should live up to Christ's example. He seems to have worked himself into such a frenzy of indignation at the corruption of the Byzantine Church and state that he tried to flee to Bulgaria. He was then arrested and detained during the rest of Leo's reign. His

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[31] See Paschalides, *Νικήτας* pp. 115-17 (on the Turks' decapitation of Nicetas' skeleton, reported in the Dresden synaxarium) and 129 etc. (for the location of Nicetas' tomb in Paphlagonia, recorded in various MSS). On the Turkish occupation of Heraclea and its recovery by the Byzantines, see Speros Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1971), pp. 114 and 116. The notice in the Dresden synaxarium, which says that Nicetas died on a January 17, may well depend on someone who had seen the recently desecrated tomb, found Nicetas' date of death inscribed on it, and calculated the time that had elapsed. Although the eleventh-century date of the Dresden synaxarium cannot be taken too literally, if it is even roughly correct it suggests that Nicetas' tomb was desecrated before 1100.

hagiographer probably exaggerated his hero's sufferings, because Nicetas had two servants even during his detention, monks were not supposed to wash or eat very much, and the illness and death of Nicetas' brother may not have been the result of mistreatment. After the emperor Alexander released Nicetas in 912 he seems to have retired to Heraclea, where he probably completed his *Secret History* around 921, soon before he died.

II

Identifying fragments of Nicetas' *Secret History* in texts that survive today requires a certain amount of guesswork. We may begin by postulating that the *Secret History* was the source of the passages by Pseudo-Symeon denouncing Photius, which though very similar in tone to those in Nicetas' *Life of Ignatius* cannot derive from that *Life* because they include much more information. Although Pseudo-Symeon's work is a world chronicle, extending from the Creation to 963, only the part from 813 onward has been published, in an antiquated edition in the Bonn Corpus. The earlier part is however mostly available in the chronicle of George Cedrenus, which copied this part of Pseudo-Symeon's chronicle with relatively few modifications and is also published in the Bonn Corpus.

The part of Pseudo-Symeon's chronicle from 813 to 963, which includes its denunciations of Photius, holds a somewhat ambiguous position between our two main families of sources for the ninth and early tenth centuries. In the main, the published part of Pseudo-Symeon's chronicle belongs to the same family of sources as the two versions of the world chronicle of Symeon the Logothete, of which the first version ends with 948 and the second version includes many additions for the period from 843 to 963. The first version has recently been published in a modern scholarly edition[32]. Unfortunately, the second version is still available only in partial

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[32] See Staffan Wahlgren, *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon* I (*Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*; Berlin, 2006, hereafter cited as "Symeon I"). Before Wahlgren's edition, modern scholars had to use inadequate editions of Symeon's text either under the names of Leo Grammaticus, Theodosius Melissenus (incorrectly called "Melitenus"; see Otto Kresten, "Phantomgestalten in der byzantinischen Literaturgeschichte", *JÖB* 25 [1976], pp. 208-12), or Georgius Monachus ("Continuatus" or "Interpolatus") or in two Slavonic translations. The absence of a proper edition has led to some serious errors in the scholarly literature. Among the worst of these are confusion of the text of the real Symeon with the considerably different text of Pseudo-Symeon (partially edited under the name of

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and inferior editions[33]. The first version of Symeon's chronicle seems to have had just four sources for the ninth century and later, all of them now lost: (1) an epitome of Theophanes' chronicle with a continuation from 813 to 829 that was also used by the chronicler George the Monk; (2) a further continuation of this epitome from 829 to 844 that was not used by George the Monk; (3) a history of Basil I and Leo VI that extended from Basil's rise in the 850's to Leo's death in 912; and (4) the history of Manuel the Protospatharius, a work probably extending from 813 to 948 that Symeon cites by name[34]. Note that this list of the four sources of Symeon's first version, if complete, leaves no room for Symeon to have used Nicetas' *Secret History* directly (though we shall see that he probably did have some indirect knowledge of it, because Manuel the Protospatharius used it). The part of Symeon's second version from 948 to 963 appears to be the original work of Symeon the Logothete himself, writing as a contemporary who had evidently been born around 925.

Most of the material in the published part of Pseudo-Symeon's chronicle is copied from the two versions of the genuine chronicle of Symeon. The first version of Symeon's chronicle expresses only favorable opinions of Photius, who is described as "extremely learned" and given credit for

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"Symeon Magister") and the misconception that Symeon wrote his work as a continuation of the chronicle of George the Monk (because parts of Symeon's chronicle have been added to George's text in some MSS).

[33] Pending the full edition by Wahlgren that is supposed to appear as the second volume of his edition of Symeon, the published texts of parts of MSS of Symeon's second version are (1) the part of *Vaticanus graecus* 167 covering the period from 886 to 961, ed. by Immanuel Bekker as Book VI of *Theophanes Continuatus* (*Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*; Bonn, 1838), pp. 353-481; (2) the part of *Vaticanus graecus* 153 covering the period from 842 to 948, ed. in V. M. Istrin, *Хроника Георгия Амартола в древнем славянорусском переводе*, 3 vols. (Petrograd/Leningrad, 1920-30), II, pp. 3-65; (3) the part of *Vaticanus graecus* 163 covering the period from 842 to 867, ed. in J. M. Featherstone, "The Logothete Chronicle in Vat. Gr. 163", *OCP* 64 (1998), pp. 420-33; and (4) the part of *Vaticanus graecus* 163 covering the period from 945 to 963 ed. in Athanasios Markopoulos, "Le témoignage du Vaticanus gr. 163 pour la période entre 945-963", *Symmeikta* 3 (1979), pp. 91-100. Note that these MSS often differ considerably from each other by rearranging or omitting parts of the material; see also Markopoulos, "Sur les deux versions de la Chronographie de Syméon Logothète", *BZ* 76 (1983), pp. 279-84.

[34] See Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 110-14 (the epitome of Theophanes and its continuation), 126-34 (the History of Basil and Leo), and 197-203 (Manuel the Protospatharius).

persuading Basil I not to blind Leo VI[35]. Pseudo-Symeon's hostile remarks about Photius appear only in passages that Pseudo-Symeon adds to Symeon's account. While the passages that Pseudo-Symeon added have no parallels in the first version of Symeon's genuine chronicle, they do have some parallels in Symeon's second version, as if between compiling the two versions of his chronicle Symeon had discovered the same source that Pseudo-Symeon used later. This source was apparently Nicetas' *Secret History*, even if Symeon knew it only from making a more careful examination of the earlier part of the history of Manuel the Protospatharius[36].

The other family of our sources for the ninth and early tenth centuries was compiled earlier than both Symeon and Pseudo-Symeon. This family consists of Joseph Genesius' *On Imperial Reigns*, the first four books of *Theophanes Continuatus*, and the *Life of Basil*, which modern scholars sometimes call the fifth book of *Theophanes Continuatus*. The latter two works, both probably composed by Theodore Daphnopates, between them cover the years from 813 to 886, the same period as Genesius' history. All these works were commissioned by Constantine VII (913-959), who, apparently after finding Genesius' history unsatisfactory, asked Daphnopates to redo it. Obviously Constantine wanted the writers he commissioned to write favorably about his own Macedonian dynasty and its founder Basil I, and unfavorably about Michael III (843-867), whom Basil had murdered and supplanted. Constantine would also not have liked Nicetas' condemnation of Photius, whom Basil I restored to the patriarchate after having deposed him earlier. Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and the *Life of Basil* all tell much the same story and seem to rely mostly on the same source. They also show parallels to the additions that Pseudo-Symeon made to Symeon, though they consistently omit or minimize the criticism of Photius that Pseudo-Symeon includes. Thus Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, the *Life of Basil*, the second version of Symeon's chronicle, and Pseudo-Symeon appear to have shared a source[37].

This common source of Pseudo-Symeon, Genesius, the Continuer, and the *Life of Euthymius* must therefore have been composed between 919, which is the date of Pseudo-Symeon's last borrowing from it, and the date of

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[35] See Symeon I 131.28 and 132.24.

[36] See Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 212-14.

[37] On Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and the *Life of Basil*, see Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 165-96.

the *Life of Euthymius*, which was written between 922/23 and 925.[38] Consequently the author of this common source dealt with the history of both Church and state, completed his work between 919 and 925, displayed a violent hostility to Photius, and affected a pedantic manner and an awkward and idiosyncratic style. Except in the extremely unlikely event that two such histories were written at the same time, the author of the common source of these four writers is surely to be identified with the historian described in our fourteenth-century review. That historian, according to the reviewer, composed a "secular and sacred history" ending around 920, wrote soon after that date, displayed a violent hostility to Photius, employed an informal and unpleasant style, but was nevertheless a man of obvious learning. He could scarcely have been anyone else than Nicetas the Paphlagonian.

The *Life of Basil*, Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and the *Life of Euthymius* all include passages that parallel Pseudo-Symeon but seem to reproduce more of their common source than Pseudo-Symeon does, indicating that Pseudo-Symeon abridged the passages he took from Nicetas' *Secret History* more drastically than the other compilers did. Moreover, when Nicetas and the real chronicle of Symeon gave parallel accounts of the same events, Pseudo-Symeon appears always to have used the real Symeon in preference to Nicetas. The use of the Byzantine tax indiction for three dates in 866-67 in the *Life of Basil* and *Theophanes Continuatus* appears to show a further link with Nicetas, who in his *Life of Ignatius* uses the indiction number for one of these dates in 867[39]. Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and the *Life of Basil* may well have omitted some of Nicetas' indictional dates, which many Byzantine writers considered inappropriate for formal prose, and Nicetas probably gave exact dates more often in his *Secret History* than in his *Life of Ignatius*, since dates were more commonly used in history than in

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[38] Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 728.21-729.19 is the last of the additions. Though Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 9-10 dates the *Life* between 920 and 925, on pp. 231-32 she acknowledges that it must have been written no earlier than "the tenth year" after 912, when Euthymius (*Life of Euthymius* 21.33-37) prophesied that peace would return to the Church; 922/23 was presumably the date when the papal legates approved the Union (cf. Jenkins and Westerink, *Nicholas I*, p. xxvi).

[39] See *Life of Basil* 17 = *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.41 (Bardas is murdered on April 21 [866] of the 14th indiction), *Life of Basil* 18 = *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.43 (Basil is crowned co-emperor on May 26 [866] of the 14th indiction), and *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.44 = Nicetas, *Life of Ignatius* 540A (Basil succeeds Michael III on September 24 [867] of the 1st indiction). *Theophanes Continuatus* III.39 records a Byzantine naval defeat by the Arabs of Crete in October of the 8th indiction under Theophilus (829), a date that also probably comes from Nicetas.

hagiography. Nicetas' use of dates must however have been limited to those that appeared in his sources, which may not have used them much.

Theophanes Continuatus cites only one source by name, for the Arab invasion of Sicily up to 829: "a history that has come into our hands written at the time by Theognostus, who also wrote a work *On Orthography*"[40]. We still have a treatise *On Orthography* by "Theognostus the Grammarian", dedicated in verse to an allegedly wise and eloquent emperor named Leo, whom the author says he knew personally[41]. Since Theognostus wrote as a contemporary on events in 829, this emperor was presumably Leo V (813-20)[42]. Theognostus the Grammarian has also been plausibly identified with the "Sicilian schoolteacher" who according to John Scylitzes wrote a history after Theophanes' chronicle concluded with 813[43]. Theognostus must have concluded his own history with the death of Michael II in 829, because though the Arab invasion of Sicily continued unabated after that date, neither Genesius nor the Continuer mentions Sicily again until the reign of Basil I (867-86). Since both Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* are confused about when Leo V reintroduced Iconoclasm, Theognostus' history seems to have served as their main source from 813 to 829 and to have avoided the issue of icons. Theognostus appears to have written under Michael II's son and successor Theophilus (829-842), but before 833, when Theophilus

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[40] *Theophanes Continuatus* II.27 (82.17-20), where in line 18 for Θεογνώστῳ τῷ read (with the only primary MS, *Vaticanus Graecus* 167) ἱστορία Θεογνώστῳ τῷ καὶ.

[41] Edited by John Anthony Cramer, *Anecdota Graeca e Codd. Manuscriptis Bibliothecae Regiae Parisiensis*, II (Oxford, 1839), pp. 1-165, with a new edition of the first part based on additional MSS by Klaus Alpers, *Theognostos Περὶ ὀρθογραφίας: Überlieferung, Quellen und Text der Kanones 1-84* (diss. Hamburg, 1964), pp. 68-115.

[42] Alpers, *Theognostos*, pp. 61-64 rightly rejects the idea that Theognostus' reference to the wisdom of the dedicatee identifies him as Leo VI (886-912), because an author who dedicates a grammatical treatise to an emperor must at least pretend that the emperor has enough education to appreciate it, and Leo V was certainly an intelligent man. I am not convinced by the arguments of Theodora Antonopoulou, "The Date of Theognostos' Orthography: A Reappraisal", *BZ* 103 (2010), pp. 1-12, that the dedicatee was Leo VI and Theognostus was extraordinarily long-lived.

[43] Cf. Scylitzes p. 3 with Bernard Flusin, "Re-writing History: John Skylitzes' *Synopsis Historion*", in John Wortley, trans., *John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811-1057* (Cambridge, 2010), p. xv and n. 13.

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adopted a much harsher form of Iconoclasm than the one his father had favored[44].

Genesius cites two more sources, which appear to have been independent of Theognostus though they dealt with the same period. One is a lost poem by Theophanes Confessor on Leo V's restoration of Iconoclasm in 815, which could hardly have been cited by Theognostus because it was hostile to Iconoclasm[45]. Then both Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* give two different accounts of the rebellion of Thomas the Slav (821-23) and prefer the same account, which *Theophanes Continuatus* vaguely attributes to "certain writers" (one of whom was presumably his predecessor Genesius) and Genesius ascribes to "*On Thomas*", evidently meaning a poem of that title that the *Suda* attributes to Ignatius the Deacon[46]. Ignatius' *On Thomas* seems to have repeated the official version of Thomas' revolt concocted by Michael II's government, which falsely asserted that Thomas had rebelled against Leo V, not to avenge Michael's murder of Leo (as was actually the case)[47]. While Theognostus might in theory have cited *On Thomas* himself, as a

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[44] See the discussion of Theognostus' history in Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 79-90.

[45] Genesius I.13.

[46] *Theophanes Continuatus* II.10 (ἐγγράφων τινῶν); Genesius II.4 (τὰ κατὰ Θωμᾶν); cf. *Suda* I 104 (τὰ κατὰ Θωμᾶν).

[47] See Paul Lemerle, "Thomas le Slave", *TravMem* I (1965), pp. 255-73 (especially p. 268, suggesting the identification of Genesius' "Version B" with Ignatius' poem) and Cyril Mango, *The Correspondence of Ignatios the Deacon: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (*Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*; Washington, 1997), pp. 12-13. Juan Signes Codoñer, *El periodo del segundo iconoclasmo en Theophanes Continuatus: Análysis y comentario de los tres primeros libros de la crónica* (Amsterdam, 1995), pp. 218-222, 227-34 and 241-46 generally agrees with Lemerle, but adds some inconclusive reservations. By contrast, Dmitry Afinogenov, "The Conspiracy of Michael Traulos and the Assassination of Leo V: History and Fiction", *DOP* 55 (2001), pp. 335-36, defends the version that Thomas rebelled against Leo because "it is found in the earliest, contemporary sources" including Methodius' *Life of Euthymius of Sardis*. But propaganda need be no more accurate if it is contemporary, and as the official version disseminated in both Constantinople and the West it naturally deceived Methodius, who was in Rome in 820 and continuously confined to a monastery from his return to Constantinople in 821 until he composed the *Life of Euthymius* in 831; see *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit, Erste Abteilung (641-867)* (Berlin, 1998-2002; hereafter *PmbZ* I), no. 4977 and Treadgold, "The Prophecies of the Patriarch Methodius", *REB* 62 (2004), pp. 229-37. Further on Ignatius the Deacon, see Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 100-6.

contemporary he would not have needed to rely on a propagandistic poem, and his history seems to have been relatively even-handed. Theognostus seems rather to be the source of the variant account that both Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* reject, which, though also unsympathetic to Thomas, is more accurate and detailed than *On Thomas* was and cannot plausibly be assigned to any other source we know.

Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* share with Pseudo-Symeon some other information about the years between 813 and 829 that seems not to come from Theognostus, Theophanes' poem, or Ignatius' *On Thomas*. This includes a report found in the same Ignatius' *Life of Nicephorus* that when crowning Leo V the Patriarch Nicephorus felt pangs that warned him of Leo's Iconoclasm; this anti-iconoclast legend can scarcely go back to Theognostus, who wrote under iconoclast emperors[48]. Then all three histories criticize Michael II for taking as his second wife a nun brought from a convent, a scandal that Theognostus, writing under Michael's son, would presumably have omitted[49]. Finally, all three later historians record that the Arabs who occupied Crete under Michael II martyred Cyril, bishop of Gortyn, though Cyril of Gortyn was in fact a third-century martyr[50]. Since a contemporary like Theognostus could scarcely have made such a glaring error, it must have been made by the later source used by Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and Pseudo-Symeon. That source was presumably Nicetas.

For the reign of Theophilus, Henri Grégoire has argued convincingly that the main sources of Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* were two highly imaginative saints' lives of Theophilus' generals Manuel the Armenian and Theophobus the Persian. Around 900, when memories of these two men were already fading, the monks of the monasteries founded by Manuel and Theophobus appear to have written their biographies in an effort to conceal the unpalatable facts that both had died as iconoclasts before 843. According to the hypothetical life of Manuel, Manuel lived on for more than twenty years after his actual death date in 838, took a leading part in restoring the icons in 843, and rescued Michael III on the battlefield sometime in the

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[48] Cf. Pseudo-Symeon, p. 604.2-6 with Genesius I.14, *Theophanes Continuatus* I.18, and Ignatius, *Life of Nicephorus* 164.12-19.

[49] Cf. Pseudo-Symeon, p. 620.9-11 with Genesius II.14 and *Theophanes Continuatus* II.24.

[50] Cf. Pseudo-Symeon, p. 624.5-8 with Genesius II.11 and *Theophanes Continuatus* II.23. On Cyril, see Carl de Boor, "Ein falscher Bischof", *BZ* 13 (1904), pp. 433-34.

late 850's, as Manuel had previously rescued Michael's father Theophilus in 838[51].

Theophanes Continuatus and Pseudo-Symeon seem also to have drawn directly or indirectly on some oral sources, like an unnamed monk who reportedly lived until the reign of Leo VI and claimed to have rebuked Theophilus and his Patriarch John the Grammarian (838-843) for their Iconoclasm[52]. Other oral sources apparently provided two different but equally legendary versions of the conversion of the Bulgars around 865, one ascribing it to the sister of the Bulgar ruler Boris-Michael and the other to a monk named Methodius (apparently a confused memory of the brother of Constantine-Cyril) who painted a scene of the Last Judgment that terrified Boris out of his paganism[53]. Such oral sources, concerning partly but not entirely forgotten events of the mid-ninth century, appear to date from the period around 900, like the biographies of Manuel and Theophobus. Though this was a time when we know Nicetas the Paphlagonian was active, it was half a century before the times of Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and Pseudo-Symeon, none of whom could have claimed to be able to recall events from the mid-ninth century.

The account of the death of Basil I in the *Life of Euthymius* shows unmistakable parallels to Pseudo-Symeon, and reasonably clear parallels to Genesius and the *Life of Basil*. According to Pseudo-Symeon, Basil's dying words were, "The unholy Photius and his henchman Santabarenus, by separating me from God and making me a stranger to true knowledge, have

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[51] See Henri Grégoire, "Manuel et Théophobe, ou la concurrence de deux monastères", *Byz* 9 (1934), pp. 183-204. Grégoire's conclusions about Manuel have been attacked in *PmbZ* I, *Prolegomena* pp. 22 and 289-90 and no. 4707, because its compilers interpret a lead seal identifying Manuel as "preceptor of the prince (βάγυλος τοῦ δεσπότου)" to mean that Manuel was preceptor of the young Michael III after 842, thus excluding the date of 838 for Manuel's death reported by Symeon and accepted by Grégoire and most other scholars. Yet this seal cannot refer to Michael III, because at the time the title of "prince" (δεσπότης) was used only for a junior emperor, not the senior emperor, which Michael was after 842; see Philip Grierson, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and the Whittemore Collection* III.1 (Washington, 1973), pp. 178-79. The obvious solution is that Manuel was preceptor of the young Theophilus before he became senior emperor in 829, when Manuel was already an experienced general.

[52] *Theophanes Continuatus* III.12.

[53] Cf. *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.14-15 with Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 664.13-665.2 and 665.18-21; see *PmbZ* I no. 4979 for the identification of Cyril's brother Methodius.

dragged me down to the same damnation as theirs"! The author of the *Life of Euthymius*, which is not anti-Photian, makes Basil leave out the reference to "the unholy Photius" and blame only Santabarenus[54]. Presumably Genesius and the author of the *Life of Basil*, who favored both Photius and Basil, simply omitted Basil's dying words as the easiest way of not besmirching either of them. Yet the original text evidently showed the detestation of Photius that was characteristic of the common source. This appears to be the same common source that is responsible for the pervasive similarities between the histories of Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and the *Life of Basil*[55]. Nicetas' *Secret History* is the only plausible candidate to be this source.

We cannot however assume that everything in Genesius' history, *Theophanes Continuatus*, the *Life of Basil*, and the additions that Pseudo-Symeon made to Symeon's chronicle derives from Nicetas' *Secret History*. For example, the *Life of Basil* includes much laudatory material about Basil I that presumably comes from a lost encomium of the emperor and not from Nicetas, who disapproved of Basil because of his favor to Photius. The *Life of Basil* also includes a genealogy tracing Basil's ancestry to the Arsacids of Parthia and Armenia that is very unlikely to come from Nicetas, who in his *Life of Ignatius* ridicules such a genealogy as a forgery by Photius; since the *Life of Basil* describes this genealogy in detail as a trustworthy source, its author probably consulted Photius' original text in the imperial archives. The *Life of Basil* includes further archival material not found in other chronicles that was presumably supplied to the author by Constantine VII[56]. Genesius seems in turn to have used the *Life of Basil* and some family traditions about his own grandfather, Constantine Maniaces[57]. Finally, the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* consulted Genesius, probably the chronicle of Theophanes, and evidently some archival material concerning the construction of the fort of Sarkel on the Don and other buildings in Constantinople under Theophilus[58].

At least five of the passages added by Pseudo-Symeon to Symeon also seem to come from sources other than Nicetas' *Secret History*. Three of

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[54] Cf. Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 699.22-700.5 with *Life of Euthymius* chap. 1, p.5.26-32; see also Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 12-14 and cf. Genesius IV.42 and *Life of Basil* 102.

[55] See J. N. Ljubarskij, "Theophanes Continuatus und Genesios: Das Problem einer gemeinsamen Quelle", *BS* 48 (1987), pp. 12-27.

[56] See Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 167-76.

[57] See Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 180-82 and 185-87.

[58] See Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 191-95.

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these passages show clear parallels with the so-called *Scriptor Incertus de Leone Armenio*, which was evidently their source[59]. This chronicle, of which our main fragment concerns the reign of Leo V the Armenian (813-820), should probably be identified with a lost chronicle from 769 to 828 composed by Photius' father Sergius Confessor and described by Photius in his *Bibliotheca*[60]. A fourth passage added to Symeon's chronicle by Pseudo-Symeon seems to come from the lost epitome of the chronicle of Theophanes with a continuation from 813 to 829 that was also used by George the Monk and the real Symeon. In this passage Pseudo-Symeon describes the iconoclast activities of John the Grammarian, a comet in the form of a headless man that presaged Leo V's Iconoclasm, an extended debate between Leo and the iconophile bishops and abbots, and Leo's enforcement of Iconoclasm under his Patriarch Theodotus (815-21). Though this passage shows clear parallels with George the Monk and Symeon, Pseudo-Symeon includes enough information that is omitted by both of them to show that his source was neither George nor Symeon, but their common source[61]. A fifth passage added by Pseudo-Symeon to Symeon's chronicle is just a short sentence, stating that the iconoclast Leo the Philosopher was consecrated Metropolitan of Thessalonica by the iconophile Patriarch Methodius (843-847). Since this is an obvious mistake – Leo was actually consecrated by his cousin, the

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[59] The passages are Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 603.3-9, 606.11-22, and 612.3-618.18. The first passage was originally identified as coming from a more complete version of the *Scriptor* by J. B. Bury, "A Source of Symeon Magister", *BZ* 1 (1892), pp. 572-74. For the other two passages, cf. *Scriptor Incertus*, ed. Francesca Iadevaia (Messina, 1987), pp. 50.37-58.235 and also ed. Immanuel Bekker in Leo Grammaticus (*Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*; Bonn, 1842), pp. 342.1-348.22 (placed third by Pseudo-Symeon) and pp. 59.258-61.307 Iadevaia and pp. 349.18-351.13 Bekker (placed second and summarized by Pseudo-Symeon). Neither of these editions of the *Scriptor* is really satisfactory; another edition by A. Markopoulos is in preparation for the *Corpus Fontium* series.

[60] See Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 90-100.

[61] Cf. Pseudo-Symeon, p. 606.11-22 with George the Monk, ed. C. de Boor and Peter Wirth, *Georgii Monachi Chronicon* (Stuttgart, 1978), p. 778.8-15 and Symeon I 128.5 (on John), Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 606.22-607.9 with George the Monk pp. 777.20-778.7 and Symeon I 128.4 (on the comet), Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 607.10-608.21 with George the Monk pp. 778.16-786.16 and Symeon I 128.6 (the debate over icons), and Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 608.22-609.21 with George the Monk, p. 777.8-20 and Symeon I 128.7-9. Note that George has rearranged this material in a less logical order, and that Pseudo-Symeon, p. 606.11-22 also includes material from the *Scriptor Incertus*, pp. 59.257-61.307 Iadevaia (pp. 349.18-351.13 Bekker).

iconoclast Patriarch John the Grammarian – it was probably a careless assumption by Pseudo-Symeon himself[62].

After subtracting these five passages that are evidently not derived from Nicetas' *Secret History*, we are left with thirty-eight passages that Pseudo-Symeon added to Symeon's work up to 919, most of which share significant features. From the beginning of Photius' first patriarchate in 858 to the end of Photius' second patriarchate in 886, five of fifteen of the additions, amounting to some two-fifths of the added text, are anti-Photian[63]. Of the whole list of thirty-eight additions, all but twelve show clear parallels with Genesius, Books I-IV of *Theophanes Continuatus*, or the *Life of Basil* that must derive from a common source, because each author includes unique material that obviously belonged to the original account, and Genesius and the Continuer omit all the anti-Photian references. One passage also shows parallels to another work composed in the circle of Constantine VII, now conventionally called *De Administrando Imperio*. Three more passages show parallels with the second version of Symeon's chronicle. Of the nine passages without parallels, two are anti-Photian, which was presumably the reason Genesius, the Continuer, and the *Life* omitted them. Thirteen of the thirty-eight additions include prophecies; six include poetry; and six include learned etymologies of names of people and places, while two more have parallels with such etymologies in Genesius. Taken as a whole, the additions deal with both ecclesiastical and secular history, often in a dogmatic and pedantic manner expressed in awkward Greek[64].

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[62] Pseudo-Symeon p. 640.15-16; for Leo's consecration by John the Grammarian, see *Theophanes Continuatus* pp. 190.18-191.3 and Treadgold, "The Chronological Accuracy of the Chronicle of Symeon the Logothete for the Years 813-845", *DOP* 33 (1979), pp. 185-87.

[63] The passages are Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 659.1-665.2 (partly anti-Photian), 665.18-21, 667.13-673.12 (mostly anti-Photian), 677.5-678.6, 681.19-682.18, 683.10-16, 683.20-684.7, 686.12-687.5, 687.7-15, 689.5-690.3 (all anti-Photian), 690.17-691.7, 693.14-694.13 (all anti-Photian), 694.17-697.2, 698.4-699.4, and 699.22-700.5 (all anti-Photian).

[64] The full list of the 38 additions I have found is Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 603.6-9 (Genesius I.24, with an etymology), 604.2-606.10 (Genesius I.4, I.13, I.14, *Theophanes Continuatus* I.9, I.11., I.18, with prophecies), 609.22-612.2 (Genesius I.17-18, *Theophanes Continuatus* I.21-23, with prophecies), 618.19-620.6 (Genesius I.19-21, *Theophanes Continuatus* I.24-25, II.1), 620.9-11 (Genesius II.14, *Theophanes Continuatus* II.24), 620.20-621.2 (no parallels), 622.1-624.8 (Genesius II.10-11, *Theophanes Continuatus* II.21-23 and 25-26, with verses), 624.11-12 (*Theophanes Continuatus* II.28), 626.2-627.10 (Genesius III.3, *Theophanes*

Parallels to Pseudo-Symeon show that many passages in Genesius' history, *Theophanes Continuatus*, the *Life of Basil*, and the *Life of Euthymius* must depend on the same source as Pseudo-Symeon, though the other texts have either deleted or muted that source's criticism of Photius. The problem is to determine exactly how much of this material in Pseudo-Symeon, Symeon, Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, the *Life of Basil*, and the *Life of Euthymius* derives from the *Secret History* of Nicetas. We can be fairly sure that Pseudo-Symeon did not acquire his knowledge of the *Scriptor Incertus* (Sergius Confessor) from Nicetas' *Secret History*, because Pseudo-Symeon is the only one of these histories that includes information from the *Scriptor*, and Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* would presumably also have used it if they had known it from Nicetas. Nicetas therefore seems not to have made use of the *Scriptor*.

Continuatus III.19, with an etymology only in Genesius), 628.3-630.10 (Genesius III.20, *Theophanes Continuatus* III.4-6), 635.15-636.7 (Genesius III.15, *Theophanes Continuatus* III.27, with a prophecy), 637.5-10 (Genesius III.5, with etymologies), 639.13-640.2 (no parallels), 641.20-643.8 and 643.12-17 (Theophanes III.14, with verses), 643.18-645.10 (no parallels, but with a prophecy), 646.20-647.2 (Genesius III.7, *Theophanes Continuatus* III.38), 647.18-654.11 (Genesius IV.2-6, *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.2-3, IV.6-7, IV.9-12, with prophecies), 659.1-665.2 (*Theophanes Continuatus* IV.13-14, IV.21, IV.36-39, *Life of Basil* 21-23, 27, 29), 665.18-21 (*Theophanes Continuatus* IV.15), 667.13-673.12 (Genesius IV.18, *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.30-32, with prophecies), 677.3-678.6 (Genesius IV.21-22, *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.34, IV.40, and IV.42, with prophecies), 681.19-682.18 (*Theophanes Continuatus* IV.35), 683.10-16 (*Life of Basil* 25, with verses), 683.20-684.7 (*Life of Basil* 26), 686.12-687.5 (no parallels, but with etymologies), 687.7-15 (no parallels), 689.5-690.3 (Genesius IV.24, *Life of Basil* 1-8, with a prophecy), 690.17-691.7 (*Theophanes Continuatus* I.10, with an etymology), 693.14-694.13 (no parallels, but anti-Photian), 694.17-697.2 (Genesius IV.32, *Life of Basil* 55-58, Constantine VII, *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. Gyula Moravcsik and trans. Romilly Jenkins, rev. ed. (*Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*, Washington, 1967), 29.119-216 (with a prophecy, and with an etymology only in Genesius), 698.4-699.4 (*Life of Basil* 101, with prophecy), and 699.22-700.5 (no parallels, but anti-Photian, and see n. 54 above); in addition, 6 passages are later than the reign of Basil: Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 705.14-707.10 (Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, 366.11-12 and 367.5-22, with etymologies and verse), 713.13-715.6 (no parallels, but with a prophecy), 716.8-14 (Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, 378.10-17), 720.5-16 (Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, 383.16-384.3, with a prophecy), 727.14-18 (no parallels, but with verses and a prophecy), and 728.21-729.19 (no parallels, but with etymologies and verses).

We cannot however seriously entertain the possibility that Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and Pseudo-Symeon made independent use of the history of Theognostus the Grammarian, the anti-iconoclast poem of Theophanes, Ignatius the Deacon's poem *On Thomas*, and the saints' lives of Manuel and Theophobus. Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and Pseudo-Symeon all make use of these lost sources in ways that are much too similar to be coincidental, for example by asserting that the unreliable account of the revolt of Thomas the Slav in Ignatius' *On Thomas* was more trustworthy than the reliable account apparently composed by Theognostus.

Although some have argued that here the common source was not a history but a hypothetical "dossier" of loose notes, such "dossiers" seem to have been unknown in Byzantium, though they have become fashionable hypotheses among some of today's Byzantinists. While a few Byzantine anthologies and collections of excerpts have reached us, not a single "dossier" from the Byzantine period seems either to survive in manuscript or even to be attested. The Byzantines had no word for "dossier" in this sense and are unlikely to have kept anything of the sort, because their parchment and paper were too expensive, and their wax tablets too small, to use for extensive rough notes. If a Byzantine went to the trouble and expense of combining historical material from several sources on parchment, he called it a chronicle. Until an actual Byzantine historical "dossier" is discovered, to conjecture the existence of such a thing seems needless and baseless speculation[65].

Leaving out whatever material cannot be derived from Nicetas' *Secret History*, we are left with a substantial body of overlapping material in Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* and parts of Pseudo-Symeon, Symeon, the *Life of Basil*, and the *Life of Euthymius*. Much of this material seems to have come originally from the history of Theognostus the Grammarian, the poems of Theophanes Confessor and Ignatius the Deacon, the saints' lives of Manuel and Theophobus, and some oral sources; but none of these written or oral sources appears to be later than the time Nicetas wrote around 921, and all of them seem to have been collected by an intermediary before being used by the authors we possess. That intermediary was evidently an historian, and no earlier historian of the whole period from 813 to 919 is attested but Nicetas. The last of Pseudo-Symeon's many additions to the first

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[65] Note that R.-J. Lilie, *Byzanz unter Eirene und Konstantin I (780-802)* (*Berliner Byzantinische Studien* 2; Frankfurt am Main, 1996), pp. 384-408 has decisively refuted Paul Speck's theory of a "dossier" that was a common source of Nicephorus and Theophanes, a theory that seems to have inspired the similar hypothesis of Signes Codoñer, *Periodo*, for the sources discussed here.

version of Symeon's chronicle is datable to 919, just before Nicetas appears to have written[66].

Since the narratives of Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and the *Life of Basil* end with 886, they cannot as a rule be used to determine what Nicetas may have recorded between that date and 921. One exception, however, is a list that Genesius includes of the Arab emirs of Crete up to "the present ruler", whose rule can be dated roughly between 915 and 930[67]. Since this emir cannot still have been ruling when Genesius himself wrote around 954, Genesius must have copied the reference from his source. While Genesius might possibly have used another source than Nicetas' *Secret History*, as a rule he seems not to have been at all conscientious in seeking out sources, and the dates between 915 and 930 fit comfortably with the date of the *Secret History*, written around 921.

In sum, when we look at this material in Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* and the relevant parts of Pseudo-Symeon, Symeon, the *Life of Basil*, and the *Life of Euthymius*, we find that it has significant characteristics in common. It deals with both ecclesiastical and secular history, often in a polemical and moralizing manner. It never has anything good to say about Photius. It shows a particular love of prophecies, which in its account always come true. Its Greek is pedantic and often awkward. Its author was especially fond of quoting poetry and including learned etymologies of names of people and places, which seldom contributed anything relevant to his narrative. For

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[66] Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 728.21-729.19.

[67] Cf. Genesius II.10 with the succession of the emirs suggested by George C. Miles, *The Coinage of the Arab Amirs of Crete* (*Numismatic Notes and Monographs* 160; New York, 1970), pp. 1-7. Anthony Kaldellis, *Genesios, On the Reigns of the Emperors: Translation and Commentary* (*Byzantina Australiensia* 11; Canberra, 1998), pp. ix-xiv, without considering the possibility that "the present ruler" dated from the time of Genesius' source rather than Genesius himself, argues that Genesius wrote an earlier version of his history between about 915 and 930. The succession of Cretan emirs appears to have been as follows (with the dates for which they are attested in parentheses and Genesius' names for them in quotation marks):

"Apohaps"/Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar ibn ʿĪsā (827/28, 847/61)
"Saïpis"/Shuʿayb (884/85, 888/89, 894-95)
"Babdel"/Abū ʿAbdullāh ʿUmar (894/912)
"Zerkunis"/Muḥammad ibn Shuʿayb
Genesius' "present ruler"/Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar (937/38)
Shuʿayb ibn Aḥmad
ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad (948/49?, 951/52?)
ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Shuʿayb (954/55, 961)

example, in describing Leo Phocas' revolt in 919 the author gave etymologies of Constantinople's Asian suburbs of Chrysopolis, Chalcedon, and Damalis, including eight hexameters purporting to be the epitaph of a woman named Damalis[68]. The author's main source for such etymologies seems to have been the sixth-century *Ethnica* of Stephen of Byzantium, most of which is now lost[69]. All these characteristics fit what our late Byzantine reviewer says about the lost work that we have identified as Nicetas' *Secret History*: a "secular and sacred history" written in awkward Greek around 921 by an "extremely learned" man who hated Photius.

III

In completing the list of our fragments of Nicetas' *Secret History*, we should note our anonymous late Byzantine reviewer's report that Nicetas mostly summarized the church histories of others up to 594, the ending date of the history of Evagrius. Nicetas must have made a few additions to his main sources before that date, because we have already learned from Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus that the *Secret History* included an otherwise unattested story about Cyril of Alexandria in the fifth century that is also found in Pseudo-Symeon's chronicle. Between 594 and 813 we have two other passages known to us only from Pseudo-Symeon's chronicle (copied by Cedrenus) that concern the eighth-century iconophile martyr Theophanes the Chamberlain and evidently derive from a hagiographical text about him that was also used for the chronicle of Theophanes[70].

We cannot absolutely exclude the possibility that this lost biography of Theophanes the Chamberlain was directly consulted by Pseudo-Symeon, who after all did use the obscure *Scriptor Incertus* (Sergius Confessor), which was evidently unknown to Nicetas. On the other hand, Nicetas wrote earlier

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[68] Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 728.21-729.19.

[69] See Aubrey Diller, "Excerpts from Strabo and Stephanus in Byzantine Chronicles", *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 81 (1950), pp. 241-53, who suggests that this material was drawn not only from the complete text of Stephen's *Ethnica* but from the ancient geographer Strabo and perhaps other authors, as is possible, and that Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and Pseudo-Symeon used this material "as the property of a school of chronography", which whatever that may mean is a less plausible hypothesis than a common literary source. On Stephen, see also Alexander Kazhdan in *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, III (Oxford, 1991), pp. 1953-54.

[70] See Treadgold, "An Indirectly Preserved Source for the Reign of Leo IV", *JÖB* 34 (1984), pp. 69-76.

than Pseudo-Symeon and in general seems to have been a more thorough researcher than Pseudo-Symeon. In Pseudo-Symeon's chronicle the material from the lost biography of Theophanes the Chamberlain is skillfully inserted into entries drawn from the chronicle of Theophanes in the right places under the years 775 and 780, though Pseudo-Symeon inserted his material from the *Scriptor Incertus* into Symeon's chronicle clumsily, leaving the impression that the attacks of the Bulgar Khan Krum at the beginning of Leo V's reign occurred later than they actually did[71]. Nicetas' *Secret History* therefore seems a more likely candidate than the original saint's life to have been Pseudo-Symeon's direct source for the material about Theophanes the Chamberlain.

Our late Byzantine reviewer gives no names for the sources of the *Secret History* after 594, perhaps because Evagrius was the last source named by Nicetas himself. Yet since almost all later Byzantine chronicles depend on the chronicle of Theophanes Confessor for the seventh to ninth centuries up to 813, we can reasonably assume that Nicetas used it as well. If Nicetas was the one who interpolated the material from the lost life of Theophanes the Chamberlain into the material from Theophanes' chronicle, that is another reason for assuming that Nicetas used Theophanes as his main source between 594 and 813. In any case, the *Secret History* is unlikely to have had much independent material to add before 813, a date more than a hundred years before Nicetas wrote.

For the period from 813 to 886, a large part of Nicetas' *Secret History* seems to have reached us. Genesius and the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* Books I-IV both used it, seemingly as almost their only source. They probably preserved much the largest part of it, because both their works are of considerable length and the *Secret History* also included extensive accounts of periods that they do not cover, from the Creation to 813 and from 886 to 921. In addition, the *Life of Basil*, the *Life of Euthymius*, and Pseudo-Symeon's chronicle all used the *Secret History* as one important source among others. Most of the material that these three texts took from Nicetas appears to be paralleled in Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus*, except for the material attacking Photius, which those two works must have systematically omitted.

To judge from Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus*, Nicetas' account of the reign of Leo V consisted largely of prophecies. These foretold Leo's accession, warned the Patriarch Nicephorus of Leo's impiety, persuaded Leo to restore Iconoclasm, and foreshadowed Leo's murder by

[71] For the references, see above, n. 59.

Michael II, which Nicetas must have regarded as condign punishment. Here, besides Theognostus the Grammarian, Nicetas' sources probably included Ignatius the Deacon's *Life of Nicephorus* and the lost poem by Theophanes. For the reign of Michael II, Nicetas mentioned the emperor's second marriage to the lapsed nun Euphrosyne, of which Nicetas surely disapproved, and Michael's ruinous wars with Thomas the Slav and the Arab invaders of Crete and Sicily, which Nicetas must again have interpreted as punishment for Michael's Iconoclasm. For Thomas' revolt the main source of the *Secret History* was Ignatius the Deacon's poem *On Thomas*, which Nicetas wrongly preferred to Theognostus' account, though he mentioned that as well. For all his interest in the supernatural, Nicetas seems to have shown some critical sense by mentioning points on which his sources disagreed and leaving material undated when he was unsure where it belonged, as he did with Leo V's reintroduction of Iconoclasm.

For the reign of Theophilus, Nicetas recorded that emperor's persecution of iconophiles and loss of Amorium to the Arabs, along with several stories of the emperor's private life. Not knowing of the continuation of Theophanes from 829 to 844, Nicetas had to rely on the largely fictional saints' lives of Theophilus' generals Manuel the Armenian and Theophobus the Persian, written around 900 when memories of them were fading, and on a more reliable account of the Forty-Two Martyrs of Amorium, though seemingly not one of those that has reached us. While the biographies of Manuel and Theophobus probably included some of the details of Theophilus' private life and persecution of iconophiles that were recounted by Nicetas, the historian seems also to have used other written and oral sources. His oral sources included the unnamed monk who lived until the reign of Leo VI and claimed to have rebuked Theophilus and John the Grammarian and another source who evidently told Nicetas how the future Patriarch Methodius had won Theophilus' favor by explaining a prophecy that Methodius himself had forged. Since Methodius' example apparently inspired Photius to forge the prophecy that won him the favor of Basil I, perhaps Methodius told the story to Photius, who told it to Arethas, who in turn told it to Nicetas[72].

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[72] See Treadgold, "Prophecies", especially pp. 234-37 on the similar prophecies of Methodius and Photius, both recorded in Pseudo-Symeon, who evidently took them from Nicetas' history; the prophecy by Photius is also in the *Life of Ignatius*. Note that the incoherence of Pseudo-Symeon's story about Methodius indicates that Pseudo-Symeon's original source (Nicetas) was considerably more detailed.

For much of Michael III's reign, Nicetas continued to depend on the saint's life of Manuel, according to which Manuel died more than twenty years later than his actual death date in 838. Nicetas described the restoration of icons in 843 at length, dwelling on the leading part taken by Manuel and the perfidy and magic arts of the iconoclast Patriarch John the Grammarian. Then Nicetas started to use the lost History of Basil and Leo, which began with the rise of Basil in 855. By this time Nicetas would have had further information from Arethas and other oral sources, like his alternative versions attributing the conversion of the Bulgars to Boris's sister and to the monk and painter Methodius. While describing the dissipation, frivolity, and blasphemies of Michael III and his courtiers, Nicetas reserved his worst vituperation for Photius, who he said had denied the Cross to a Jewish magician in return for comprehensive knowledge of pagan literature.

Nicetas continued summarizing the History of Basil and Leo for his account of the reigns of both those emperors, but by that time he could also draw on his own memories as well as those of his contemporaries. Presumably he used oral sources when he described not just how the deposed Patriarch Photius won over Basil I by a fabricated prophecy and genealogy but how Photius' "Manichaean" crony Santabarenus deceived Basil by pretending to conjure up the spirit of Basil's dead son Constantine. Nicetas' sources for Santabarenus' intrigues also apparently included a letter from Bishop Stylianus of Neocaesarea to Pope Stephen V (885-91).[73] Some of Nicetas' oral sources must have been extremely dubious ones, like those for his account of the mythical wiles of the captured African emir "Soldanus" (Sawdān) in Italy and of the demons in the Peloponnesus who received early news of the fall of Syracuse in 878. The former of these passages also shows parallels to the *De Administrando Imperio*, indicating that its compiler, like the other authors employed by Constantine VII, drew on Nicetas' *Secret History*[74]. Probably Nicetas described Basil I's appearance from personal

[73] Cf. Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 693.14-694.13 with G. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, XVI, cols. 432C-433B and Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 40-44.

[74] For Soldanus (Sawdān), cf. *Life of Basil* 56-58 with Constantine VII, *De Administrando Imperio*, 29.119-216 and Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 694.17-697.2. (On p. 694.20, note Pseudo-Symeon's blunder in calling Bari "the great city of the Ragusans", which may go back to Nicetas). Jenkins et al., *Constantine Porphyrogenitus: De Administrando Imperio*, Vol. II, *Commentary* (London, 1962), p. 102 describe the ultimate source of this digression as "Lombard tales". The sources for this episode postulated by Ihor Ševčenko, "Re-reading Constantine

observation, since he seems to have been in his twenties when Basil died in 886[75].

Beginning with Leo VI's accession in 886, both Genesius' history and the *Life of Basil* end, and (except for Genesius' list of the emirs of Crete) the sources for Nicetas' history that remain are Pseudo-Symeon, the *Life of Euthymius*, and the second version of the genuine Symeon. Of Pseudo-Symeon's six additions to the first version of Symeon's chronicle, three have parallels in Symeon's second version. Although Symeon seems not to have used Nicetas' *Secret History* for his first version until the History of Basil and Leo ended in 912, after that date even Symeon's first version appears to depend on Nicetas' history, if indirectly. One indication is that Symeon's chronology is generally accurate up to the coronation of Romanus I on December 17, 920 and of Romanus' wife on the following Epiphany, but then Symeon misdates the coronation of Romanus' son Christopher in May 921 and the Church union of July 920[76]. Apparently Nicetas ended his history with Epiphany 921 but failed to mention the Church union of 920, which he must have disapproved because it offered mercy to those who had condoned Leo's fourth marriage. Yet from Nicetas' point of view the exile of the adulterous Zoë Carbonopsina and the displacement of her bastard son gave the *Secret History* an acceptable ending.

Porphyrogenitus", in Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin, eds., *Byzantine Diplomacy* (Aldershot, 1992), p. 191 and n. 60 may well have been used in Nicetas' *Secret History*, which was in turn used for the *Life of Basil*. On the Peloponnesian demons, cf. *Life of Basil* 68-70 with Genesius IV.33 (noting the etymologies) and Symeon I 132.12; see also A. A. Vasiliev *et al.*, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II.1 (Brussels, 1968), pp. 70-79.

[75] Pseudo-Symeon, p. 686.12-16.

[76] Cf. Symeon I 136.11 (where Nicetas' history would have ended) with 136.12-14, with the dates in Wahlgren's apparatus. Note that Christopher's coronation is dated to the 5th indiction, though May 921 fell in the 9th indiction, and that the Church union is dated correctly to the 8th indiction but incorrectly placed after the coronations of Romanus, his wife, and Christopher; then the exile of Stephen the Magister is correctly dated to February 8 of the 9th indiction (921), but placed after Christopher's coronation, though it had occurred more than three months earlier. As Jenkins, "The Chronological Accuracy of the 'Logothete' for the Years A.D. 867-913", *DOP* 19 (1965), p. 95 points out, the Bulgarian occupation of Adrianople in September 914 in Symeon I 132.16 came after the Arab raid in A.H. 301 (ended July 28, 914) in Symeon I 132.17 (Wahlgren's apparatus is mistaken here; see Vasiliev *et al.*, *Byzance* II.1, p. 229 n. 2); but this is a fairly minor error.

In compiling the two versions of his chronicle Symeon seems to have used the history of Manuel the Protospatharius, which depended heavily on Nicetas' *Secret History*. Manuel apparently liked to conclude predictions or other sequences of events with the phrase "which was indeed what happened". While no such phrases appear in the section of Symeon's chronicle from 948 to 963, which was independently composed by Symeon, they occur four times in the section from 921 to 948, which Symeon evidently copied from Manuel[77]. Similar phrases meaning "which was indeed what happened" also appear twice in the part of the first version of Symeon's chronicle on the years from 886 to 921, and a third time in a passage found only in Symeon's second version[78]. All three of these phrases seem to occur within material derived from Nicetas' *Secret History* that Symeon used to supplement his basic source, the History of Basil and Leo. The explanation seems to be that for this period Symeon used material from Nicetas' history that had been rewritten by Manuel, who added this feature of his own style in the process of rewriting.

Apparently the first version of Symeon's chronicle drew on Manuel's history but omitted some parts that Symeon later went back and added in his second version. For example, Symeon's citation of Manuel's history by name, which is missing from the first version of Symeon's chronicle, appears in the second version[79]. Interestingly, Symeon adorns the second version of his chronicle with etymologies for the names of the city of Mesembria, the Constantinopolitan quarter of Pharus, and several other places. The etymologies for Mesembria and Pharus also appear in Pseudo-Symeon and *Theophanes Continuatus*, in parts of their accounts of the reigns of Leo V and Leo VI that are evidently derived from Nicetas' *Secret History*. Probably Symeon copied these two etymologies from material on Leo V and Leo VI that Manuel had copied from Nicetas, and took the other etymologies from

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[77] See Symeon I 136.50 (καὶ γέγονεν), 136.60 (ὃ δὴ καὶ γέγονεν), 136.80 (ὃ δὴ καὶ γέγονεν), and 136.83 (ὃ καὶ γέγονεν). Similar phrases can admittedly be found in other Byzantine historians (e.g., Scylitzes, p. 369.19: ὃ δὴ καὶ γέγονεν), but not with the same frequency, and some of these instances may actually be influenced by the author's having read the phrase in Manuel's text or a text copied from his.

[78] See Symeon I 133.38 (ὃ δὴ καὶ γέγονε) and 133.41 (ὃ δὴ καὶ γέγονε) and Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, p. 373.23 (ὃ καὶ γέγονεν).

[79] Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 427-28. Further on Manuel's history, see Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 197-203.

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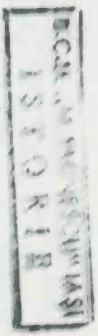
similar material in Nicetas' history that has not been preserved in the texts we have[80].

Nicetas seems to have drawn on his own memory when he recorded the raids by the Arabs under Leo of Tripoli in 904 and by the Rus' under Oleg in 907, each of which he illustrated by giving learned etymologies for the people and places that occurred in the narrative. Presumably Nicetas considered these raids divine punishments for Leo VI's sins, especially for the emperor's liaison with Zoë Carbonopsina, who bore Leo a son in 905 and became his fourth wife in 906. Here the second version of Symeon's chronicle and Pseudo-Symeon made different selections from Nicetas' original accounts. Symeon copied both the narrative and the etymologies for the Arabs' raiding and omitted both the narrative and the etymologies for the raiding of the Rus'; Pseudo-Symeon omitted the narratives for both but included the etymologies, which therefore read like a disconnected set of encyclopedia entries. Only Symeon's account of the Arab expedition, and a fragmentary phrase carelessly included by Pseudo-Symeon in an etymology of the Rus', show what Pseudo-Symeon did[81]. In Romilly Jenkins' words, "The Continuer [*Theophanes Continuatus*] and Pseudo-Symeon are no doubt drawing on a common source, which the former has used intelligently, the latter stupidly; or, to speak more justly, from which the latter has borrowed topographical material which he has not worked up into a coherent narrative"[82]. Although some have doubted Jenkins' interpretation, no other explanation of Pseudo-Symeon's bizarre text seems possible[83]. Jenkins' "common source" can now be identified as Nicetas.



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[80] Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 413.3-6 (Mesembria; cf. Pseudo-Symeon, p. 706.12-15), 423.22-23 (Pharus; cf. *Theophanes Continuatus* I.10), 424.1-5 (the Euxine), 424.6-7 (Hiera), 437.16-22 (Proconnesus), 464.6-8 (Prietus), and 465.5-10 (Prusa).

[81] See Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 705.14-707.10, the second version of Symeon's chronicle in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, 366.11-17 and 367.5-22 (cf. Symeon I 133.40), and the perceptive explanation of Romilly Jenkins, "The Supposed Russian Attack on Constantinople in 907: Evidence of the Pseudo-Symeon", *Speculum* 24 (1949), pp. 403-6.

[82] Jenkins, "Supposed Russian Attack", p. 403.

[83] Alexander Kazhdan, *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* III, p. 1522, remarks, "R. Jenkins interpreted a passage in Pseudo-Symeon Magistros describing the 'Ros-dromitai' as referring to Oleg's expedition ..., but the passage is too vague to warrant any firm conclusion". Yet Pseudo-Symeon, p. 707.3-6 (which Jenkins tentatively translates, "The Russians ... having perused the oracular sayings, given either in the way of counsel or from divine inspiration, of those who had got the

As a longtime resident of Constantinople and a friend or acquaintance of many scholars and clerics, Nicetas would have had access to a number of oral sources for his own times. As has already been noted, one of these was probably his former teacher Arethas of Caesarea, a friend of Photius[84]. Another was probably a certain Constantine the Paphlagonian, who came from the same region as Nicetas and figured prominently in his narrative as a servant of Leo VI's chamberlain Samonas and then as Leo's chamberlain himself. Nicetas described how a vision of Christ announced Constantine's promotion as Grand Chamberlain to Constantine's father, founder of the Monastery of Nosiae, who may also have been among Nicetas' sources[85]. Not all of Nicetas' oral sources were reliable, especially for the earlier part of the ninety-year period when he lacked a reliable chronicle source after the end of Theognostus' history in 829. Nicetas' difficulties in finding books at Heraclea, even with the help of students and friends in Constantinople, may show in his overlooking the continuation of Theophanes from 829 to 844, which he would presumably have used if he had had it[86]. Yet on the whole he seems to have had access to many books and good information, as our late Byzantine reviewer implies.

Nicetas cannot have expected a wide readership for a work that was entitled *Secret History* and denounced nearly everyone connected with the contemporary Church and state for compromising the faith. What we know about his work gives us little reason to dispute the critique of its style and objectivity made by our reviewer, even if his criticism was somewhat exaggerated because of his indignation at Nicetas' denunciations of Photius. Certainly in the *Life of Ignatius* Nicetas never pretends to impartiality or literary elegance in trying to demonstrate Ignatius' virtues and Photius' faults. Arethas, himself not a particularly elegant writer, sharply criticizes the composition of Nicetas' encomium of Gregory of Nazianzus[87]. Nonetheless,

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mastery over them...") is not only vague but incoherent; and Jenkins' interpretation depends not just on this phrase but on Pseudo-Symeon's whole list of names, which like that for 904 must describe the course of a military expedition, even if its details remain disputable.

[84] See n. 26 above.

[85] Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 712.2-22 (cf. Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, 375.10-376.8) and 713.13-715.6, referring to the Monastery of Nosiae at Chalcedon (see Janin, *Églises*, p. 59); at Symeon I 133.61, for ἐν Ὁσίαις read ἐν Νοσίαις.

[86] On this history, see Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 110-14.

[87] See Kazhdan, *History* II, p. 95, citing Arethas, *Scripta Minora* I, no. 32, pp. 267-70, a letter from Arethas to Nicetas.

as our anonymous reviewer noted, Nicetas was a very learned man. In his *Life of Ignatius* he uses the optative mood twice in the introduction and calls Constantinople "Byzantium" and the Rus' "Scyths"[88]. The passages that Genesius and Pseudo-Symeon appear to have taken from Nicetas' *Secret History* are written in a generally straightforward if often polemical manner. When they are unclear, the reason seems often to be that Pseudo-Symeon abridged them too drastically. The other writers who used the *Secret History* apparently discarded its polemics and softened its style with rhetorical padding.

To be sure, this reconstruction requires us to identify as a single history three independently attested works: the anonymous "secular and sacred history" read by our late Byzantine reviewer, Nicetas' *Secret History* used by Xanthopulus and Pseudo-Symeon, and the common source of Pseudo-Symeon, Genesius, the Continuer, the *Life of Basil*, and the *Life of Euthymius*. If we were to assume that these three works were different from each other, we would need to postulate three separate but very similar histories written around 921. The authors of all three would have detested Photius, whom the majority of Byzantines revered. All three histories would have recorded obscure and often supernatural information. At least the second and third would have been used by Pseudo-Symeon, who was not an especially assiduous researcher. At least the first and second would have been authored by Paphlagonians, would have been largely preserved until the fourteenth century, and would then have been lost. To suppose, with no good reason, that three such similar histories were composed around 921 seems much more speculative than to assume that they were the same history – a highly important one.

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[88] Nicetas, *Life of Ignatius*, ed. ed. in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 105, cols. 488B (ἀπογινώσκοιτο), 489A (πιστεύοιτο), 497B, 512B, and 516D (Byzantium), and 516D (Scyths). On Nicetas' style, cf. Jenkins, "The Classical Background of the *Scriptores Post Theophanem*", *DOP* 8 (1954), p. 19, who writes that the stylistic arguments of Šestakov for Theodore Daphnopates' authorship of *Theophanes Continuatus* "are not convincing; indeed, it would not be difficult to show by exactly similar comparisons with the *Vita Ignatii* that the books were written by Nicetas Paphlago, a conclusion which would be, on external evidence, highly unlikely. What such methods of comparison plainly do show, is that the historians of this group were all brought up in the same rhetorical school, and used the same rhetorical style and vocabulary". Jenkins' remarks about the resemblances of the styles of Daphnopates and Nicetas seem striking, given that he knew both authors well and never considered the possibility that *Theophanes Continuatus* was compiled by Daphnopates largely from Nicetas' *Secret History*, as suggested here.

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III. Features of Byzantine Culture

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THE REVIVAL OF BYZANTINE LEARNING AND THE REVIVAL OF THE BYZANTINE STATE*

Between the eighth and eleventh centuries the Byzantine Empire staged an almost unparalleled political and cultural revival, a recovery that is all the more striking because it followed a period of severe decline. By the early eighth century the empire had lost roughly two-thirds of the territory it had possessed in the year 600. Its remaining area was routinely raided by the Arabs and the Bulgarians, who at times threatened to take Constantinople and extinguish the empire altogether. The wealth of the state and its subjects was greatly diminished, and artistic and literary production had virtually ceased. By the early eleventh century, however, the empire had regained almost half of its lost possessions, its new frontiers were secure, and its influence extended far beyond its borders. The economy had recovered, the treasury was full, and art and scholarship had advanced to a high level. To be sure, the late eleventh century brought another serious decline, but, even so, the recovery of the preceding three hundred years was a remarkable achievement[1].

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* An earlier version of this article was delivered as a lecture at the University of Uppsala, Sweden, and again at the University of Bergen, Norway, in April 1979. The final version was completed at the Byzantine Institute of the University of Munich on a research fellowship from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. I would like to thank George Majeska of the University of Maryland for reading an early draft and giving helpful advice. My thanks also go to Michael Hendy of the University of Birmingham for his comments and to Cyril Mango of Oxford University (whose publications largely inspired this article) for providing me with a copy of his article on Ignatius the Deacon, which is cited in note 31, below.

[1] There is no comprehensive study of the middle Byzantine period, as the seventh through eleventh centuries in Byzantium are commonly called, and many aspects of the period are not well covered in the secondary literature. Moreover, most of the sources are poorly edited, and a few, like the important *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete, remain unpublished. [One version of Symeon's chronicle has since been edited by S. Wahlgren, *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon* I *(Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae)*, Berlin, 2006.] The best narrative, with a useful bibliography, is by George Ostrogorsky; see his *A History of the Byzantine State*, trans. Joan Hussey (2d ed., Oxford, 1968), chaps. 2-5. [Now see also Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival, 780-842* (Stanford, 1988) and *idem*, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford, 1998).] An inspired popularization, for which the

To consider the political and cultural advances of this period as parts of a single phenomenon seems reasonable. After all, military, economic, and cultural progress have gone together in a number of other states and civilizations. Fifth-century Athens and Rome under Augustus provide the most obvious examples in antiquity. In Western Europe the formation of Charlemagne's empire corresponded to a "Carolingian Renaissance", the display of strength of the first four Crusades corresponded to a "Renaissance of the Twelfth Century", and the colonial expansion of the Age of Discovery accompanied the Renaissance itself. And, during modern times, the states representing Western European civilization gradually came to surpass the rest of the world not only in their military and economic power but also in their technology and cultural influence. In all such cases, examining the apparent connection between political and economic progress and cultural progress might help explain how both kinds of progress arose. Naturally, each case is different and requires separate treatment in detail.

Probably the easiest explanation of this apparent connection in the case of Byzantium would run like this: when the empire ended enemy raids on its own territory and began instead to raid and conquer enemy territory, Byzantine resources naturally expanded, and more money became available to patronize art and literature. Therefore, Byzantine military achievement led to economic advances, which in turn led to cultural revival. No doubt this hypothetical pattern did apply at times during the course of the recovery, particularly as greater wealth financed an artistic renaissance. Yet in other respects—at least if the findings of the last two generations of Byzantinists are correct—military advances do not seem to have come first, economic advances second, and intellectual advances third. If anything, the reverse seems to be true.

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documentation is, unfortunately, often not given and sometimes not extant, is Romilly Jenkins's *Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries, A.D. 610-1071* (New York, 1966). For an excellent treatment of the intellectual decline and subsequent revival, see Paul Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin: Notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzance des origines au Xe siècle* (Paris, 1971). And, for the most complete bibliographies for the period, see J. M. Hussey, ed., *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 4: *The Byzantine Empire*, part 1 – *Byzantium and Its Neighbors* (2nd ed., Cambridge, 1966), 835-58. More specialized works are cited below.

Byzantine military power had never been fully broken. That the empire survived the attacks of the Arabs and Bulgarians between 650 and 850 was, in itself, a great accomplishment. But it was a defensive accomplishment, and, even as such, it was a limited success. The organization of the military provinces (themes), which covered not just the frontier districts but the whole territory of the empire, suggests that Byzantium was not trying so much to stop the raids as simply to hold on to as much land as possible after the raiders left. And at least Thrace and Asia Minor did remain Byzantine; but these territories were neither very safe nor pleasant places to live during this period. In the early ninth century the Bulgarians killed the emperor in a battle in Thrace and sacked its main towns. As late as 838 the Arabs sacked Ancyra (modern Ankara) and Amorium, the principal cities of Asia Minor, and in 843 or 844 they defeated the Byzantines at Mauropotamum, far inside imperial territory[2]. During the 850s the Byzantine army did better, but the real change occurred in the 860s. Henri Grégoire, George Ostrogorsky, and others have considered the campaign of 863 decisive in freeing Asia Minor from Arab raids[3]. By 872, under Basil I, the Byzantines had conquered the Arabs' main allies on the border, the Paulician heretics, and permanently altered the military balance with the Abbasid Caliphate in the empire's favor. Thus, the beginning of the Byzantine military revival may be placed in the period between the 840s and the 870s.

The empire's economic position, however, had improved some years earlier. Though the government had never reached a state of bankruptcy in the seventh and eighth centuries, its expenses for defense and tribute were heavy and its resources shrinking. In the eighth century there was practically no building apart from some repairs[4]. Under Constantine V (741-75) Patriarch

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[2] The Arabs killed Nicephorus I in 811 and sacked Sardica (modern Sofia) in 809, Develtus and Mesembria in 812, Hadrianople (modern Edirne) in 813, and Arcadiopolis in 814—all in Thrace; Steven Runciman, *A History of the First Bulgarian Empire* (London, 1930), 47-70. On Asia Minor, see A. A. Vasiliev and Henri Grégoire, *Byzance et les Arabes*, 1 (Brussels, 1935): 195-98; and, on the date of Mauropotamum, see Warren Treadgold, "The Chronological Accuracy of the *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete for the Years 813-845", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 33 (1979), 191-92.

[3] See Ostrogorsky, *A History of the Byzantine State*, 227; Henri Grégoire in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, 4, pt. 1: 110-11; and Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, 249-56.

[4] I know of only two major building projects in the eighth century: the repair of the walls of Constantinople in 740 and the repair of the Aqueduct of Valens in 767; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. Carl de Boor (Leipzig, 1883), 412, 440. Justinian II

Nicephorus complained of extortionary taxation and a severe shortage of gold in circulation. Romilly Jenkins has argued that, when Empress Irene reduced taxes in 801, she provoked a fiscal crisis that led to her overthrow by her finance minister, who became Emperor Nicephorus I. Imperial finances were certainly in bad enough condition to cause Emperor Nicephorus to enact drastic financial reforms in 810, which the contemporary chronicler Theophanes denounced for their harshness[5]. After this, however, as J. B. Bury noted, no further signs of financial difficulty appear in the records until the eleventh century. Throughout the reign of Theophilus (829-42) the emperor carried on a program of building unparalleled since the sixth century[6]. Yet Theophilus left a large surplus in the treasury at his death, and fourteen years later his widow, Theodora, left an even larger one – amounting to about 34 percent of the record surplus left by Anastasius I in 518, when the empire was far larger and more secure[7]. Although her son, Michael III, spent most of the surplus, both the imperial finances and the economy continued strong during the subsequent reign of Basil I (867-86), when large-scale building resumed. The beginning of the empire's economic revival can, therefore, be placed between 810 and the 830s.

Finally, the Byzantine revival of learning appears to have begun even earlier. Although Byzantine education did not completely break down during the seventh and eighth centuries, Paul Lemerle has detected a marked cultural decline, reflected in the virtual cessation of copying manuscripts and a sharp

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had begun some new building in 694, financing it by large-scale exactions from the upper class; this heavy taxation contributed to his overthrow the following year; *ibid.*, 367- 69.

[5] Jenkins, *Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries*, 103-04; and for Theophanes, see below, nn. 60-68.

[6] J. B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire from the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil I (A.D. 802-867)* (London, 1912), 218-19. Bury plausibly estimated that Theophilus' buildings cost no less than the three hundred thousand pounds of gold spent by Justinian I on St. Sophia; *ibid.*, 221 n. 1. For the dates of the buildings, see Treadgold, "The Chronological Accuracy of the *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete," 173-74, 175, 178, 187, and 189.

[7] Anastasius' surplus was three hundred and twenty thousand pounds of gold; Procopius, *Historia Arcana*, ed. Jakob Haury (Leipzig, 1963), 19. 7. Theodora's surplus was one hundred and nine thousand pounds of gold and three hundred pounds of silver; Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn, 1838), 172; and Joseph Genesius, *Regum Libri Quattuor*, ed. A. Lesmuiller-Werner and J. Thurn (Berlin, 1978), 4. 11. (I am skeptical about the editors' addition to line 91 of Genesius, because it disagrees with Theophanes Continuatus).

decrease in literary production, beginning as early as the late sixth century. During the sixty years of the first iconoclast period (728-88), the only important Greek writer, John of Damascus, lived in the caliphate, not in Byzantium. At about the same time as the restoration of the icons in 788, however, a number of notable scholars and writers began to appear. At least by 790, according to Jean Irigoin, the minuscule hand came into use. This invention, which made it possible to copy books much more quickly, cheaply, and legibly, has been compared in importance – with only some exaggeration – to the invention of printing. Judging from the quality of the literature of the early ninth century, Ihor Ševčenko has observed that the cultural revival was "in full bloom before the victory of [iconophile] Orthodoxy in 843"[8]. From this time forward, in fact, the cultural level of the empire remained high; thereafter, no generation of Byzantines was without scholars of note until the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The beginning of the Byzantine revival of learning, then, can be placed in the late eighth century.

To recapitulate briefly, Byzantine scholarship revived under Constantine VI and Irene (780-802), a time when the Bulgarians and Arabs had the better of their battles with imperial troops and imperial finances were evidently in poor condition. The Byzantine economy revived in the period 810-30, when the imperial armies were soundly defeated by the Bulgarians and Arabs and imperial territory was constantly raided by the Bulgarians, Arabs, and rebel troops of Thomas the Slav[9]. Only in the middle of the ninth century, when the intellectual and economic recoveries were far advanced, did military recovery begin. Admittedly, the empire had not been in really desperate military or economic straits since the early eighth century, and, to be sure, modem knowledge of the Byzantine economy remains poor. It is difficult, however, to argue that the empire's intellectual revival did not begin well before its main military advances.

That the intellectual revival came first does not, of course, prove that it was a cause of the economic and military recoveries. It was certainly not the only cause. Perhaps the most obvious reason for the empire's new military success was external: the abrupt decline of its greatest enemy, the Abbasid

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[8] Lemerle, *Le premier humanism byzantin*, 68 -108, 121; Irigoin, "Survie et renouveau de la littérature antique à Constantinople (IXe siècle)", *Cahiers de civilization médiévale*, 5 (1962): 288; and Ševčenko, Review of *Le premier humanism byzantin*, in *AHR*, 79 (1974): 1534.

[9] On Thomas's rebellion, which between 821 and 823 reached most of both Asia Minor and Thrace, see Paul Lemerle, "Thomas le Slave", *Centre de recherche d'histoire et civilization byzantines: Travaux et Mémoires*, 1 (1965): 254-97.

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Caliphate, in the ninth century. An internal reason for the empire's economic and military recovery, emphasized in particular by George Ostrogorsky, was the rise of small landowners; invasions and resettlements had broken up many large estates, which made taxation and military recruitment easier for the Byzantine government. Peter Charanis and others have stressed the military and economic advantages of the new manpower provided by Armenians and Slavs who migrated into or were forcibly settled in the empire in the eighth and ninth centuries[10]. New manpower and better government control might well have led to economic progress before military progress, providing more money to pay for a bigger and better army.

Non-Byzantinists may also be ready to believe that advances in education and scholarship could have contributed to the empire's economic and military revival. But Byzantinists may be skeptical on two grounds. First, they know that the number of Byzantine scholars was always small and the circulation of their works limited. Lemerle has estimated that even in the tenth century those who received a full literary education at any one time were only two to three hundred[11]. If this estimate is correct, the total number of those with such an education was roughly three thousand. Second, Byzantinists know that Byzantine scholarship was a matter more of learning for learning's sake than of practical knowledge. A learned Byzantine was more likely to spend his time memorizing Homer than inventing gunpowder (though there is the well-known exception of Greek Fire). Indeed, many Byzantinists have claimed that a party of well-educated urban bureaucrats was largely responsible for ruining the empire in the late eleventh century by their persistent neglect of the army and the provinces[12].

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[10] Marius Canard in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, 4, pt. 1: 711-27; Ostrogorsky, "La commune rurale byzantine", *Byzantion*, 32 (1962): 139-47; and Charanis, "Observations on the Demography of the Byzantine Empire", in *Thirteenth International Congress of Byzantine Studies: Main Papers*, 14 (Oxford, 1966): 1-19. Although Byzantinists have generally agreed that there was a rise of small landholders and that their increase benefited the state economically and militarily, Paul Lemerle has argued (persuasively, I think) against the existence of the "farmer-soldiers" that Ostrogorsky postulated for this period; see Lemerle, "Esquisse pour une histoire agraire de Byzance: Les sources et les problèmes", *Revue Historique*, 219 (1958): 32-74.

[11] Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantine*, 257.

[12] See, for example, Speros Vryonis, "Byzantium: The Social Basis of Decline in the Eleventh Century", *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 2 (1959): 159-75.

Nevertheless, impractical and pedantic though their scholarly efforts may have been, those few well-educated Byzantines were principally responsible for the administration of the church and state during the entire period of the recovery, and they cannot be denied some credit for it. Moreover, as Robert Browning has recently noted, the few who received a full literary education in the classics were only a small fraction of the educated. The empire's vast number of provincial officials and clergymen had to know how to read and write; inscriptions of ownership and other sources indicate that many civil and military officials in the provinces were not only literate but owned and read a number of books. Accounts in saints' lives show that an elementary education was available even in villages; signatures on documents reveal that most monks and many ordinary laymen were at least minimally literate. Browning has concluded that in Byzantium, unlike the situation in medieval Western Europe, "the ability to read and write did not mark out a man sharply from his fellows for life"[13]. Most of Browning's evidence, however, dates from the ninth century and later. Here I propose to examine the beginnings of the revival of Byzantine learning and their possible effects on political developments.

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Throughout Byzantine history the same groups both dominated the empire's intellectual life and took the main part in running the Byzantine church and state. This intelligentsia – to use that word freely – was composed of civil servants, church officials, and urban monks who lived in Constantinople and its environs. These men comprised the vast majority of those who had a secondary education, had read some classical literature, and could write fairly correct literary Greek and do advanced arithmetic without

[13] Browning, "Literacy in the Byzantine World", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 4 (1978): 52-53, 39-54. In a lecture given at the Thirteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies at Birmingham in April 1979, Cyril Mango estimated that illiterate Byzantines were, "at a rough guess, 80 percent of the population". A literacy rate of 20 percent would be at least two million people. Though Mango later indicated that this rate is probably too high, one million literate people seems a quite conservative estimate for the tenth century. That figure provides a needed corrective to the estimate of three thousand with a complete classical education, which, as Browning has noted, is itself probably too low; "Literacy in the Byzantine World", 40. [See now also Browning, "Further Reflections on Byzantine Literacy", in *To Hellēnikon: Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr.* (New Rochelle, 1993), I. 69-84.]

making too many mistakes. Although differing somewhat in outlook, these three groups differed little in education and in social status. Prominent clerics and monks came mostly from families of urban civil servants and had generally completed their education before they were ordained or took their vows. Ties of family and friendship and interlocking habits of office holding bound these groups together. Civil servants were often promoted to high church office and some took monastic vows; many church officials were monks as well. Sometimes, certain outsiders entered one of these three groups by acquiring a literary education. It was this educated class, thus defined, who had to bring about an intellectual revival, if there was going to be one.

This class produced the empire's few leading writers of the early and middle seventh century: the historian Theophylact Simocatta, a civil servant under Heraclius (610-41); the poet George of Pisidia, a church official under Heraclius; and the theologian Maximus Confessor, a civil servant under Heraclius, who later became a monk. The empire's last major writer before the intellectual revival was the patriarch Germanus (715-30), a theologian, whose father had been a civil servant under Constans II (641-68)[14]. But these were not good times for the Byzantine intelligentsia. Its schools were in decline; military crises kept it occupied; and the domestic upheavals between 695 and 717 resulted in the death, exile, or demotion of many of its members.

Throughout the eighth century this educated class does not seem to have had much enthusiasm for iconoclasm. Most urban monks, like other monks, were against it and suffered severely in the iconoclast persecutions[15].

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[14] I have not counted John of Damascus, who was not a subject of the empire, among this group. On Theophylact, see Herbert Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, I (Munich, 1978): 313-19; on George of Pisidia, see Gyula Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, I (2nd ed., Berlin, 1958): 288-89; and, on Maximus and Germanus, see Hans-Georg Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (Munich, 1959), 436-42, 473-75.

[15] On the persecution of the monks, especially see Peter Brown, "A Dark-Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy", *English Historical Review*, 88 (1973): 30-34. Brown's view that the monks were persecuted because they were iconophiles is the usual interpretation, which in my opinion has not been substantially undermined by a recent argument by Stephen Gero. Gero has admitted that Constantine V persecuted iconophiles, that the monks were iconophiles, and that a number of sources say that Constantine persecuted monks because they were iconophiles; but he still has speculated that the real reason Constantine persecuted monks was that the emperor was a libertine and hated ascetics; Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Constantine V with Particular Attention to the Oriental Sources* (Louvain, 1977), 122-42. This conjecture, based on what look like

Civil and ecclesiastical officials were usually prevented from favoring icons openly because their careers were in the hands of iconoclast emperors. Nonetheless, when Leo III introduced iconoclasm in 726, men of rank and education were foremost among the protesters and were punished accordingly[16]. In 730, Patriarch Germanus was deposed for opposing iconoclasm[17]. The highest civil and ecclesiastical officials helped the usurper Artavasdus seize Constantinople in 741 and temporarily restore the icons[18]. In 766 nineteen high officials were punished for having conspired with the iconophile leader Saint Stephen the Younger; among this group may have been the father of the future patriarch Nicephorus, who was certainly punished for iconophilism under Constantine V[19]. In 780 Leo IV punished still another group of high officials for iconophilism, one of whom died and was counted as an iconophile martyr[20]. During the first period of iconoclasm, no Constantinopolitan official, cleric, or monk emerged as a leader of the

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iconophile slanders of Constantine's morality, seems to me to be revisionism for revisionism's sake.

[16] Theophanes stated – with obvious exaggeration – that these persecutions of the educated ended the Christian scholarly tradition that had prevailed in the empire since Constantine I; *Chronographia*, 405. 5-14.

[17] Germanus retired to his ancestral estate; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 408. 31-409. 11; and Nicephorus, *Breviarium*, ed. Carl de Boor (Leipzig, 1880), 58. 17-24.

[18] Theophanes Monotes, whom Constantine V had left in charge of the capital, and the Patriarch of Constantinople Anastasius both sided with Artavasdus; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 415. 2-22; and Nicephorus, *Breviarium*, 60. 14-24. Although the iconophilism of Anastasius and even of Artavasdus may have been opportunistic, even opportunistic iconophilism on their part would be a sign of genuine iconophile sentiment among the ruling class in Constantinople.

[19] The leader of the conspiracy was Constantine Podopagurus, Logothete of the Drome, the principal civil official; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 438. 2-26. (In line 7, τὸν προρρηθέντα ἔγκλειστον is Stephen; *ibid.* Also see *ibid.*, 436. 28-29.) Patriarch Constantine was also charged with complicity, but Theophanes implies that the charge was false; *ibid.*, 438. 26-439.5. On Nicephorus' father, see Paul Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople* (Oxford, 1958), 56.

[20] Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 453. 10-20. As every interpretation of the eighth century must, my interpretation here relies heavily on the chronicles of Theophanes and Nicephorus, which show a definite pro-iconophile bias. But for the present purposes they seem trustworthy: a pro-iconophile bias is not a reason for honoring as iconophiles disaffected officials and monks who were not really iconophile. Of course, their iconophilism does not mean that these men may not also have had other reasons for their disaffection with the iconoclast emperors.

iconoclast movement, although such men were the natural leaders of any theological movement. Instead, the educated class wrote little or nothing, leaving the defense of iconoclasm to the emperors and some provincial bishops from Asia Minor[21].

In 780, however, the iconophile empress Irene took power and recalled the iconophile monks from exile. Almost at once, the civil servants, clerics, and monks in and around Constantinople began research, teaching, copying, and writing – in favor of icons. The incumbent patriarch repented of his toleration of iconoclasm and abdicated in 784; his successor, Tarasius, had been head of the civil service and was the most famous scholar of his day, an expert in classical poetry in particular. Under Tarasius, extensive research in the works of the Church Fathers was done to support the restoration of the icons at the Second Council of Nicaea in 788. Tarasius' successor as patriarch was Nicephorus (806-15), who had earlier been both a civil servant and a monk and was himself a noted scholar[22]. Nicephorus wrote theological works against the iconoclasts and a chronicle with an anti-iconoclast slant.

Tarasius appointed as his patriarchal secretary the monk George Syncellus. George set to work on an ambitious world chronicle that was completed after his death in 810 or 811 by his friend Theophanes, a monk from a family of civil servants. Theophanes' continuation, completed according to George's plan, is strongly anti-iconoclast[23]. In 806, the Constantinopolitan deacon Stephen wrote the notable *Life of Saint Stephen the Younger*, whose hero was the iconophile leader martyred under

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[21] Stephen Gero, in his two monographs on the first iconoclastic period, has convincingly argued that the emperors Leo III and Constantine V were their own most important theologians, though certain provincial bishops did play a part in defending iconoclasm; Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III with Particular Attention to the Oriental Sources* (Louvain, 1973), esp. chaps. 8-11, and *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Constantine V, passim.*

[22] On the research done for this council, see Cyril Mango, "The Availability of Books in the Byzantine Empire, A.D. 750-850", in *Byzantine Books and Bookmen: A Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium* (Washington, 1975), 29-35. On both Tarasius and Nicephorus, see Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin*, 128-35.

[23] On George Syncellus and Theophanes, see Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, 331- 32, 334-39. [On both, now see Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke, 2013), 38-77]. Cyril Mango has recently argued that the *Chronographia* attributed to Theophanes is almost entirely the work of George; Mango, "Who Wrote the Chronicle of Theophanes?" *Zbornik radova Vizantinološkog instituta*, 18 (1978): 9-17. Mango's argument is very persuasive.

Constantine V[24]. Under the patriarchates of Tarasius and Nicephorus and even earlier, Abbot Plato of the Bithynian monastery of Saccudium, another former civil servant, was perfecting the minuscule hand, in which he copied many theological works. Plato specialized in florilegia from the Fathers, which doubtless gave prominence to texts in support of the icons. At the same time Plato's cousin, Abbot Theodore of Studius, the well-educated son of a civil servant, wrote voluminous and elegant theology, poetry, and epistolography. Under him, the monastery known as Studius in Constantinople became a center both of learning and of opposition to iconoclasm[25].

Therefore, it seems fair to say that the educated class in Byzantium, which was also the traditional ruling class, disliked iconoclasm and opposed it when the opportunity arose. This conclusion would agree with the impression of Hélène Ahrweiler about iconoclasm – that "the common people followed official decisions, especially in Constantinople, whereas the traditional ruling classes remained attached to the old traditions"[26]. No doubt there were exceptions, but the groups that had administered church and state in the past would naturally have resented a repudiation of past practices. Whatever its origins, iconoclasm effectively centered power in the hands of the emperor at the expense of the church and the monks, and this transfer of power the educated class resented as well[27]. The challenge that this doctrine presented roused that intelligentsia from a prolonged period of intellectual inactivity into a renewal of copying, researching, and writing. A group of educated Byzantines capable of staging an intellectual revival had always existed; what was needed was the impetus provided by the threat of iconoclasm[28].

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[24] See Ihor Ševčenko, "Hagiography of the Iconoclast Period", in Anthony Bryer and Judith Herrin, eds., *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham, 1977), 115-16.

[25] Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin*, 122-28; and Theodore of Studius, *Laudatio Platonis*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, 99: col. 820A.

[26] Ahrweiler, "The Geography of the Iconoclast World", in Bryer and Herrin, *Iconoclasm*, 27.

[27] See Gerhart Ladner, "Origin and Significance of the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy", *Mediaeval Studies*, 2 (1940): 127-49; and Brown, "A Dark-Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy", 1-34.

[28] Compare this assessment with the observation of Cyril Mango on iconoclasm and book production: "While in itself Iconoclasm had no connection with book production, let alone a classical revival, it certainly gave an impulse to a more systematic collection and study of Patristic literature. Once put in motion, this current eventually spilled over into secular literature". "The Availability of Books in the Byzantine Empire", 44-45.

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This impetus, rather than any increase in wealth or patronage, appears to explain the revival of learning. Though an iconoclast, Emperor Constantine V was an educated man and sponsored much theological research in the iconoclast cause[29]. But he failed to attract scholars of real distinction to his side, a sign of the unwillingness of the best-educated Byzantines to join him. Conversely, the iconophile empress Irene, although she sponsored the Second Council of Nicaea, was not a founder of schools or libraries or a patroness of learning in the strict sense. To be sure, she appointed learned men to high office, but no more than most Byzantine rulers did; the bureaucratic careers of Tarasius and Nicephorus had already begun under the iconoclast emperors. All of the major scholars of the first generation of the revival of learning pursued scholarship in their spare time: by profession they were civil servants, church officials, and monks, not teachers or researchers. Their scholarly activities cost the state little or nothing that would not have been paid out anyway. Although some apparently advanced their careers through their scholarship, their desire to advance the iconophile cause seems beyond dispute.

During the second iconoclast period (815-43), the emperors evidently realized how helpful scholars had been in restoring the icons and made deliberate efforts to recruit scholars to help in banning the icons again. Although the emperors do not seem to have had much success in winning educated men of the old families to iconoclasm, imperial patronage was more attractive to lower-class scholars who had recently entered the ranks of the educated – a category that the revival of learning had naturally expanded. Not surprisingly, some who had been won to iconoclasm through patronage changed sides as soon as the icons were restored.

The most enthusiastic and influential of the new iconoclast scholars was John the Grammarian, whom Leo V appointed to head the theological commission that prepared for the reintroduction of iconoclasm. Leo would have made John the patriarch of Constantinople in 815 if "the patricians" had not objected that John was "young and obscure"[30]. Michael II made John the tutor to his son Theophilus; as emperor, Theophilus treated John as a trusted adviser and finally did make him patriarch in 838. Later the same year, Theophilus created a professorship for John's nephew, the learned Leo the Mathematician, who had reportedly been poor and unknown in earlier years. In 840 Theophilus honored Leo by making him the metropolitan of

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[29] Mango, "The Availability of Books in the Byzantine Empire", 29-31.

[30] Immanuel Bekker, ed., *Scriptor incertus de Leone Armenio*, appendix to Leo Grammaticus, *Chronographia* (Bonn, 1842), 359. 16-20.

Thessalonica. Another important iconoclast scholar was Ignatius the Deacon, an epistolographer, hagiographer, and poet, who had been a student of the Patriarch Tarasius but joined the iconoclasts while they were in power. Leo V appointed Ignatius metropolitan of Nicaea[31]. Ignatius and Leo, but not John, joined the iconophiles when they finally emerged victorious in 843.

Even during the second period of iconoclasm, iconophile scholars of the traditional kind were still active. Theodore of Studius and Patriarch Nicephorus continued to write under Leo V and Michael II. Theophilus treated iconophile scholars with a mixture of hostility and respect. He kept Saint Methodius, an abbot and polymath, under arrest at court in order to benefit from his learning[32]. The emperor was intimidated by the noble poetess Cassia when she was a candidate for his hand; rejected, she became an abbess and hymnographer[33]. Theophilus condemned the bureaucrat-historian Sergius Confessor for iconophilism and exiled him with his wife and children; one of Sergius' children appears to have been Photius, perhaps the best of all Byzantine scholars. During this exile Photius probably did much of the reading and notetaking for his famous literary compendium known as the *Bibliotheca*[34]. Photius' career belongs mostly to a period, the so-called Macedonian Renaissance, that modern scholars have long recognized as a period of scholarly revival[35].

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[31] On the dates of John's patriarchate and Leo's professorship, see Treadgold, "The Chronological Accuracy of the *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete," 178-80 and 185-87. On John and Leo more generally, see Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin*, 135-47, 148-76. (Lemerle also mentions another low-born scholar who joined the iconoclasts, Antonius Cassimates; he was made the patriarch of Constantinople in 821 by Michael II; *ibid.*, 140-41). [On Ignatius, see now Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, 100-6.]

[32] Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, 116.

[33] On the authenticity of Cassia's encounter with Theophilus, see Treadgold, "The Problem of the Marriage of the Emperor Theophilus", *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 16 (1975): 325-41. Otherwise on Cassia, see Ilse Rochow, *Studien zu der Person, den Werken, und dem Nachleben der Dichterin Kassia* (Berlin, 1967).

[34] On Photius, see Cyril Mango, "The Liquidation of Iconoclasm and the Patriarch Photius", in Bryer and Herrin, *Iconoclasm*, 135-39. The *Bibliotheca* was probably composed in 845 and represented work done over many years before that; see Warren Treadgold, *The Nature of the* Bibliotheca *of Photius* (Washington, 1980), 16-51.

[35] On the Macedonian Renaissance, see Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin*, chaps. 7-10, and the references cited therein.

Such were the scholars of the first rank in the early ninth century. About the second rank naturally much less is known. Several of the famous scholars had students, sometimes many. Tarasius taught Ignatius the Deacon and possibly others. Theodore of Studius, too, had students, and other monks at the Studite school taught extensively. The teacher of Leo the Mathematician, whose name is not known, is described as a learned man; he presumably instructed others. Leo, Ignatius, and John the Grammarian all taught, and Leo's students were many[36]. According to one Byzantine source, an unnamed student of Leo's who was captured by the Arabs in 838 could provide explanations and demonstrations of Euclid that the court geometers of the caliph could not match. When the caliph asked the student how many men in Constantinople were as learned as he, the student replied that they were numerous and ranked himself among the students rather than the masters[37]. Some seven years later Photius wrote to his brother, "In our day, in geometry, arithmetic, and the other sciences, as you know as well as I do, there are many among our acquaintances who have no less exact knowledge, I dare say, than [Ammonius] the son of Hermias ..." a typically Byzantine way of saying that Byzantine scholars were as good as those of antiquity. But in the same passage Photius complained about the practice of discarding books that was common in earlier times, making it plain that the enlightenment of his day represented a major change[38].

The invention of the minuscule hand in particular made possible an expansion of Byzantine education and literacy outside the urban educated class and outside the capital. Even after the use of minuscule had become widespread, books were still expensive and scarce, but they were

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[36] See Theodore's letters to his students in *Patrologia Graeca*, 99: cols. 937C-940B, 940C-944B, 1373B-1376D, 1404B-1405c, 1421B-1425A, 1460B-1461C; and Ignatius' letter to his student Constantine in Ignatius, *Epistolai*, ed. Manuel Gedeon (Constantinople, 1903), no. 57, cols. 54-55. Also see Mango, "The Availability of Books in the Byzantine Empire", 29-35; Lemerle, *Le premier humanism byzantin*, 135-47, 148-76; Theodore of Studius, *Laudatio Platonis*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, 99: col. 820A; and Bekker, *Scriptor incertus de Leone Armenio*, 359: 16-20.

[37] Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, 186-87. On the date, see Treadgold, "The Chronological Accuracy of the *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete," 185-87.

[38] On this passage, see Warren Treadgold, "Photius on the Transmission of Texts (Bibliotheca, Codex 187)", *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 19 (1978): 171-75.

considerably cheaper and far more plentiful than they had been before[39]. No doubt the number of literate and well-educated Byzantines, while still small, increased substantially after the first restoration of the icons in 788. Ann Moffat's recent survey of education in the iconoclastic period, based on hagiography, seems to show evidence of this increase. Of the eleven saints whom she principally studied, four were born during and seven after the first period of iconoclasm. Of the four saints born before 788, two were uneducated and two were urban monks educated in or near Constantinople. Of the seven born later, all were literate, including six educated in the provinces. Two were born just after 788: Theodore of Edessa (793-after 860), whose schooling in Edessa as described in his *Life* inspires some doubts, and Nicholas the Studite (793-868), who was probably illiterate when he came from Crete as a youth to be educated at the Studite school in Constantinople[40]. Although small, Moffat's sample suggests the spread of schooling that might be expected.

Much work remains to be done on the letters of Theodore of Studius, but the list of his correspondents demonstrates just how widespread education was in this period. Because Theodore's letters are always eloquent and usually erudite, these correspondents must have been people of some education. Theodore wrote at least eleven hundred and twenty-four letters, of

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[39] See Mango, "The Availability of Books in the Byzantine Empire", 29-35. Mango has, I believe, overstated the rarity of books in the ninth century. His estimates of the number of books used by George Syncellus and Theophanes are exceedingly low, and he has minimized the importance of the private library of Photius (I have calculated that it contained, at a minimum, one hundred and fifty volumes); see my *The Nature of the* Bibliotheca *of Photius*, chap. 6. Nigel Wilson has arrived at low estimates of several Byzantine libraries by counting only books from them that we know of today – as if we can know of more than a small fraction of the books that then existed. The longest list, the seventy-eight volumes in the will of Eustathius Boilas, is the only source that is likely to be complete. See Wilson, "Books and Readers in Byzantium", in *Byzantine Books and Bookmen*, 7-8.

[40] The uneducated were Saints Joannicius (746-846) and John of Psicha (d. 820/29); the educated urban monks born before 788 were Saints Stephen the Younger (713-65) and Nicephorus of Medicium (755-813). Those born after 788 were Saints Evaristus the Studite (b. 819), educated in Galatia; Joseph the Hymnographer (816-86), educated in Sicily; Nicholas the Studite; Constantine the Jew (probably born late in the second iconoclastic period), educated in Phrygia; Theodore of Edessa; and Theodora of Thessalonica (born early in the ninth century) and Athanasia of Aegina (ninth century), both educated in Aegina. Ann Moffat, "Schooling in the Iconoclast Centuries", in Bryer and Herrin, *Iconoclasm*, 86-90.

which less than half (five hundred and sixty-one) survive[41]. While it is sometimes hard to tell which correspondents of the same name are the same people, our collection appears to have been written to roughly three hundred and thirty different addressees, including thirty-one groups. The total includes some fifty civil servants, thirty officials of the secular church, fifty abbots and abbesses, and at least seventy-five ordinary monks and nuns. Among those who might be expected to be uneducated are at least fifty identifiable provincials (and probably far more who are not identifiable), about fifty women (of whom approximately half were wives of civil servants and half were nuns), many men of unspecified status, and some of low status, including a perfume-seller and a chandler[42]. Of ninety-one letters that have been dated, only five date before 800, twenty-three between 800 and 809, forty-six between 810 and 819, and seventeen between 820 and Theodore's death in 826[43]. The dates of the letters themselves may indicate that education was spreading at this time, especially because the later addressees are noticeably lower in rank than the earlier ones[44].

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Of what political benefit was the Byzantine revival of learning? Almost all of the famous scholars of the period of revival held positions of responsibility in the civil service of the capital, in the church of

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[41] See Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire*, 451-52; and Patrick O'Connell, "The Letters and Catecheses of St. Theodore Studites", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 38 (1972): 256-57.

[42] I have made my calculations from the index of correspondents in *Patrologia Graeca*, 99: cols. 1855-58, checking the texts for clues to the status of correspondents when it is not specified, and from the list of other letters in *ibid.*, cols. 1669-80. [Theodore's letters have now been re-edited by Georgios Fatouros, *Theodori Studitae Epistulae* (*Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*; Berlin, 1991).]

[43] See the chronological index in *Patrologia Graeca*, 99: cols. 1857-58.

[44] Of course, Theodore's connections and correspondence would have tended to expand as he grew older, but I do not believe that this expansion explains the whole difference. Since Theodore was born in 759, he was already forty-one in 800. The basic character of the letters excludes other objections: that some of Theodore's letters are not real letters, that they have been extensively rewritten, or that some of his correspondents had his letters read to them by others. I do not think that anyone who has studied the letters would doubt that they are real letters without extensive retouching or that the recipients were educated people who were usually writing to Theodore themselves.

Constantinople (which was, in a sense, a branch of the civil service), or in urban monasteries that had considerable political influence. What did they accomplish for the empire?

One of the emperors' principal objectives was to persuade Byzantines that official ideas of Orthodoxy were correct. In 788, after fifty years of iconoclasm, the scholarly Tarasius succeeded in restoring the icons for Irene. And the scholarly John the Grammarian was instrumental in banning them again in 815 for Leo V. In 843, Empress Theodora chose the learned Saint Methodius to restore the icons for good. If Orthodoxy was a benefit – and there are some purely secular reasons for considering iconoclasm a cultural step backward – Byzantine scholarship deserves much of the credit for ending iconoclasm[45]. The re-establishment of Orthodoxy brought improved relations with Christians in the West and in the caliphate, virtually none of whom were iconoclasts.

Byzantine scholarship also contributed to the empire's diplomacy. Emperor Theophilus sent John the Grammarian on an embassy to the Arabs, and Photius was part of an embassy to the Arabs in the reign of Michael III. Theophilus showed off the empire's technology by receiving foreign ambassadors in a room equipped with mechanical lions that roared and mechanical birds that sang. When Theophilus learned that the caliph had invited Leo the Mathematician to teach at the Abbasid court, the emperor appointed Leo to teach in a school in his own palace. During negotiations after the Byzantine defeat at Amorium in 838, the caliph allegedly offered better terms in return for a visit by Leo. Theophilus refused, on the ground that it would be folly to hand over the Byzantines' knowledge to foreigners[46]. Scholarship was in fact an important part of the empire's carefully nurtured prestige, which under Theophilus took on a brilliance that became legendary despite his military failures. Nor was the prestige of Byzantine scholarship all empty show: Leo the Mathematician designed for Theophilus an optical

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[45] See Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin*, 107-08.

[46] On John's embassy, datable to 830, see the references in Treadgold, "The Chronological Accuracy of the *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete," 176-78; and, on Photius' embassy, probably datable to 845, see Treadgold, *The Nature of the* Bibliotheca *of Photius*, chap. 2. For references concerning the mechanical devices, which were probably put in place between 834 and 836, see Treadgold, "The Chronological Accuracy of the *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete," 175. And, on Leo's court appointments, see, for the date, *ibid.*, 185-87; and, for the narrative, Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, 189-90.

telegraph linking the Arab frontier with Constantinople that had both diplomatic and military value[47].

Probably the greatest triumph of Byzantine diplomacy was the extension of Byzantine influence over the Slavs through their conversion to Eastern Orthodoxy; for this, Byzantine scholarship was instrumental. The close connection of scholars with the missionary effort suggests that the Slavs accepted Orthodox Christianity largely in deference to the Byzantines' superiority in learning. The conversions began with the mission to Moravia of Saint Constantine-Cyril. Constantine-Cyril learned the Slavonic language and invented a Slavonic alphabet, which made possible the subsequent translation of the Bible and other works from Greek into Slavonic – an achievement directly attributable to the intellectual revival, because Constantine-Cyril was a student of both Leo the Mathematician and Photius[48]. As patriarch of Constantinople, Photius was himself the central figure in converting the Bulgarians and aligning them with the Byzantine Church as well as in sending the first mission to the Russians[49].

The activity of the great scholars, however, was probably less important in beginning the political recovery than was the gradual rise in the number of educated men and in the level of their education. Ramsay MacMullen has recently argued that an important cause of the political decline of the Roman Empire in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages was the decline in the ability of the civil service to express itself clearly in writing, to keep usable records, and to handle numbers[50]. Conversely, an important cause of the political revival of the same empire in the ninth century (and of course it was the same empire) was the increasing ability of the bureaucracy to perform these tasks.

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[47] See Charles Diehl, "La légende de l'empereur Théophile", *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, 4(1931): 33-37; and Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin*, 154-55.

[48] On Byzantine influence among the Slays in general, see Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500-1453* (London, 1971); and, on the mission to the Moravians, see *ibid.*, 137-53. On Constantine-Cyril's mentors, see Ševčenko, Review of Lemerle's *Le premier humanisme byzantin*, 1533. Lemerle has, I believe incorrectly, remained unconvinced that Constantine-Cyril was ever a pupil of Leo or of Photius; for his argument, see Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin*, 163-65.

[49] On the mission to the Bulgarians, see Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, 84-97; and, on the mission to the Russians, see *ibid.*, 183-84.

[50] MacMullen, *The Roman Government's Response to Crisis: A.D. 235-337* (New Haven, 1976), 48-70.

That the civil service had always been literate and able to do arithmetic was only natural in a state as centralized as Byzantium was. The tax system required a list of all of the heads of households and an assessment of all the cultivated land, classified by use and quality. These records were used every year to collect the land tax, hearth tax, yoke tax, and pasture tax as well as four proportional surcharges. Most imports had to be valued and subjected to customs duties according to a schedule[51]. Numerous, complicated laws had to be enforced. The army was stationed all over the empire, in places and numbers recorded on muster rolls. The soldiers' pay, sent out to them periodically from Constantinople, was dispensed according to payrolls. For every general offensive or defensive campaign, the soldiers had to be assembled from their usual stations at specified staging areas. At times the emperors ordered thousands of their subjects to be resettled in other parts of the empire, an order of great complexity. Since the state did not borrow or debase its coinage in this period, the budget had to balance every year or the deficit had to be made up from reserves that had been saved in previous years by careful management. The church, a virtual department of the state with many philanthropic functions, also had a far-flung administration and a budget to balance. These tasks were always performed, but, of course, they were not always performed equally well.

For them to be done well, many bureaucrats were needed to keep and consult correctly a very large number of handwritten records and accounts. As all who have studied manuscripts know, even the best scribes make copying errors, particularly in copying numbers; and the worst scribes make a great many. Laws and orders were written in literary (*Koinē*) Greek, even though by this time spoken Greek was very different in vocabulary, grammar, and syntax – and in pronunciation, which affected spelling. Learning to read and write thus involved many of the problems of learning a foreign language. Even the well-educated had problems. In the middle of a tenth-century manual of regulations for assessing land, someone inserted a palindrome verse that may be translated, "O law, my brain could grasp running water more easily than it could grasp you"[52]. For anyone who has waded through

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[51] For the standard work on imperial finances, still see Franz Dölger, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der byzantinischen Finanzverwaltung* (Leipzig, 1927; reprint ed., with addenda and corrigenda, Hildesheim, 1960). Also see George Ostrogorsky, *Die ländliche Steuergemeinde des byzantinischen Reiches im X. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1927; reprint ed., with postscript, Amsterdam, 1969).

[52] *Fiscal Treatise*, 113. 23, edited in Dölger, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der byzantinischen Finanzverwaltung*, 113. 23: Ἐμὸν νόα ῥοῦς ἔλε σοῦ ῥᾷον, νόμε.

the manual's bureaucratese, the verse is no joke. By being unable to understand such rules, many officials must have made assessments that were much too high or too low, with serious consequences for the taxpayers and the state[53].

There was, in addition, the problem of doing arithmetic without Arabic numerals or a zero. The Byzantines had inherited one of the least valuable legacies of the ancient Greeks – their system of numerical notation. In Greek notation, the accented letters of the Greek alphabet stood, in order, for the numbers from one to nine, next for those from ten to ninety in increments of ten, and then for those from one hundred to nine hundred in increments of one hundred. The letters were reused with accent marks beneath them to reach nine hundred thousand. Any of these letters written above an "M" multiplied the value by ten thousand. Fractions were written by using double accents and superscripts. Thus, the possibilities for misreading numbers were endless. Addition and subtraction under such a system, to say nothing of multiplication and division or the problems involved with fractions, were far more complicated than they are in Arabic notation[54]. But multiplication, division, and fractions were essential for assessing taxes and figuring budgets.

The poverty of the sources for the seventh and eighth centuries precludes any clear account of the effects of the decline of education on imperial administration. The seventh century did see the emergence of the system of military provinces (themes), under which the administrative levels in the empire were reduced from four to two. The new system consisted of the central government and five themes, ruling territory that earlier had been

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(Literally, "Running water has seized my mind more easily than you, O law".) For a description and translation of this treatise and another like it, see Charles M. Brand, "Two Byzantine Treatises on Taxation", *Traditio*, 25 (1969): 35-60. (But Brand omits the verse from his translation.)

[53] For example, the author of the manual noted that some assessors made the mistake of taking the total amount of tax with the four surcharges included and then adding the surcharges to the tax again; *Fiscal Treatise*, 122. 34-123. 1; and Brand, "Two Byzantine Treatises on Taxation", 56-57. This would have increased the total owed by about 23 percent over the correct amount.

[54] We must memorize 180 arithmetical combinations (if we are to do without our pocket calculators), but the Byzantines, using Greek notation, had to memorize 1,026. See Nicomachus of Gerasa, *Introduction to Arithmetic*, trans. Martin D'Ooge (New York, 1926), 66-70. In practice the Byzantines often used shortcuts (the abacus for one), but the shortcuts themselves undoubtedly led to serious errors in poorly trained hands.

administered by the central government and the descending bureaucratic tiers of two Pretorian prefectures, five dioceses, and twenty-six civil provinces. This change decreased the number of civil servants in the provinces and, consequently, eased the problem of recruiting them; it also concentrated the empire's system of taxation and allocation in the hands of the central bureaucracy[55]. But how well did this system function?

The chroniclers Theophanes and Nicephorus reported that the iconoclast emperors of the eighth century managed to pile up a substantial surplus of gold by minimizing expenditures, confiscating the property of iconophile monasteries, and raising the taxes of both farmers and city dwellers. In 767, according to Nicephorus, this situation led to a gold panic, in which landowners had to sell their crops at a fifth of the normal price in order to obtain enough gold to pay their taxes[56]. In a letter to Empress Irene, Theodore of Studius deplored the ruinous taxes to which the working class was subjected under her predecessors, when tax collectors were everywhere. They were said to have demanded from fishermen the price of one out of every three fish. Both Theodore and Theophanes praised Irene for reducing city taxes and trade duties[57]. Despite these reductions, Irene still had some gold reserve when she was overthrown in 802[58].

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[55] For a clear and recent survey of these administrative changes, see M. F. Hendy, "On the Administrative Basis of the Byzantine Coinage, c. 400-c. 900, and the Reforms of Heraclius", *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, 12 (1970): 129-37. In counting provinces and themes, I have followed J. Karayannopulos, *Die Entstehung der byzantinischen Themenordnung* (Munich, 1959), maps 1, 3, whose findings seem generally reliable.

[56] For tax increases under Leo III, see Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 410, 412; and, for those under Constantine V, see Nicephorus, *Antirrheticus*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, 100: cols. 513C-516A. For confiscations under Constantine V, see Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 443, 445-46. And, for the gold panic, see Nicephorus, *Breviarium*, 76. Nicephorus reported that in 767 wheat sold at sixty modii per nomisma; *ibid.* The normal price was about twelve modii per nomisma; George Ostrogorsky, "Löhne und Preise in Byzanz", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 32 (1932): 321-22. Nicephorus' report does not, of course, mean that the gold in circulation fell to only 20 percent of the normal amount; the psychology of panic, which would have particularly affected the area around Constantinople when taxes fell due, would have greatly aggravated the problem.

[57] Theodore, *Patrologia Graeca*, 99: cols. 929B-933c. Also see Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 475.

[58] Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 476.

These scattered complaints of fiscal oppression and reports of surpluses prove little about the efficiency of the administration. The tax system did produce substantial revenue, especially in combination with wholesale confiscation of monastic properties. But the tax rates were evidently high, so that even an inefficient system could have been lucrative. Theodore, who gave the most detailed description, wrote of widespread corruption among the tax collectors and their demands from the poor for more than was due[59].

The first really useful evidence for the financial administration of the middle Byzantine state is Theophanes' lengthy description of the financial measures of Emperor Nicephorus for 810 and 811. Theophanes wrote only two or three years after the events he described. Though he declared that Nicephorus' financial measures were intolerably oppressive, most modern scholars have seen them as reforms of some merit. Nicephorus, who had been Irene's finance minister, was in a position to know what reforms were needed and how to enact them. Nicephorus' plans allow us to infer the abuses he wished to correct.

According to Theophanes, Nicephorus ordered a new census of the whole empire, probably the first in at least seventy-five years and badly needed. Aside from a modest roll tax collected at the time of the census, the tax rates appear not to have been raised[60]. The census began perhaps in late 807 and was completed in 810[61]. Apparently, it turned up evidence of massive

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[59] Theodore, *Patrologia Graeca*, 99: 932A-B.

[60] Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 486. 26-28: "[Νικηφόρος προσέταξε] ἐποπτεύεσθαι πάντας, καὶ ἀναβιβάζεσθαι τὰ τούτων τέλη, παρέχουντας καὶ χαρτιατικῶν ἕνεκα ἀνὰ κερατίων β΄". I translate, "[Nicephorus ordered] a survey to be made of all and their taxes to be increased so that they paid two additional keratia [one-twelfth nomisma] each as a roll tax". This interpretation is also that of Bury; see his *History of the Eastern Roman Empire*, 214 n. 1. The passage could conceivably mean that the basic rates were raised as well and that the two keratia were levied on each nomisma of tax, but then the reader would be so likely to misunderstand in Nicephorus' favor that I do not believe Theophanes would have used these words. On all of Nicephorus' measures, see *ibid.*, 212-18; and G. I. Brătianu, *Études byzantines d'histoire économique et sociale* (Paris, 1938), 195-211. Brătianu has suggested that Nicephorus did raise the rates; *ibid.*, 201-02. In general, my interpretations tend to follow those of Bury rather than those of Brătianu.

[61] Although Theophanes reported it under the year 810, the census presumably took more than a year to complete, and I am inclined to believe that it began with the first year of the fifteen-year indiction (assessment) cycle in September 807. Leo III had ordered a partial census in 733, another first year of the indiction;

and long-standing tax evasion by the wealthy. Theophanes complained that the emperor's inspectors went everywhere, showing no respect for rank and encouraging servants to inform against their masters. Among the monstrous exactions that Theophanes condemned were Nicephorus' demands that imperial officials pay any back taxes that they had evaded over the past eight years and that those who had evaded inheritance taxes pay them for the past twenty years[62].

When the inspectors were unable to discover how a man had become rich without paying taxes, Nicephorus cleverly ordered him taxed under the law of treasure trove, as if he had found a pot of gold (the order included anyone who actually had). The emperor also enforced the collection of port and market duties, which seem to have gone unpaid frequently in the past. Further, he ordered duties to be paid on slaves who were imported without passing the imperial customs station at Abydus and had previously been legally duty free by the luck of geography. Finally, Nicephorus ordered the usual hearth tax to be collected from the tenants of charitable foundations, who had been evading taxation even though they were simply ordinary farmers. In this instance, the hearth tax seems to have been legally due all along, because Nicephorus demanded back payments from the first year of his reign[63].

Nicephorus also took measures to bring back into production land that had been deserted. He forced a number of people to settle, again without regard to wealth, in the European territories that had been invaded by the Slavs. Although Theophanes' charges of oppression are plausible enough, the economic and political benefits of this resettlement were probably great[64]. The emperor also conscripted bankrupt farmers into the army, assigning their

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Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 410. Also see note 71, below. Admittedly, however, the significance of the indiction cycle in this period remains obscure. Diocletian's census began in 288, the first year of the indiction, and continued until 302 (under a five-year cycle; the fifteen-year cycle began in 313, under Constantine). See A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, I (Norman, Okla., 1964): 454.

[62] Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 487. 21-27, 489. 24-28, 487. 9-11. I would translate τοὺς πένητας as "[even] the poor", since it is clear that Nicephorus did not treat the rich more favorably. On Nicephorus' failure to respect the rich, see *ibid.*, 486. 19-22, 488. 10.

[63] Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 487. 6-9, 488. 8-10, 487. 11-13, 486. 29-487. 2.

[64] *Ibid.*, 486. 8- 10. Also see Peter Charanis, "Nicephorus I, The Savior of Greece from the Slavs", *Byzantina-Metabyzantina*, 1 (1946): 75-92.

taxes – and presumably their land – to the nearest rich landholder. Furthermore, Nicephorus forced rich shipowners to buy unused land from him at a fixed price; the taxes charged on it then compelled them to bring it under cultivation. Beyond this, the emperor canceled tax exemptions on cultivated land, particularly that belonging to churches and monasteries[65]. Finally, Nicephorus invested some of the empire's gold surplus by forcing the shipowners of Constantinople to take out sizable loans from him at 16 ⅔ percent interest – an innovation that the emperors of the eighth century seem never to have thought of. Naturally, the shipowners had to expand their trade in order to pay[66].

Such sweeping reforms must have been motivated by serious abuses. Behind almost every reform previous mismanagement can be detected. The census had been inaccurate and out of date. Officials had abused their power to avoid paying taxes. Rich men had evaded taxation by deceiving or bribing officials or had obtained various legal tax exemptions, probably through influence or bribery. Inheritance taxes and port and market duties in particular had gone unpaid, since legacies and commercial transactions are easier to conceal than land, especially in the absence of good records. Merchants had avoided tariffs by selling slaves before they passed the customs station; secular tenants of charitable institutions had evaded the hearth tax. Much land had been deserted because of enemy raids or the bankruptcy of the landholder. Churches and monasteries had paid little or no taxes on cultivated land. And the gold in the imperial treasury had remained unproductive, the economic consequence of which had been gold deflation.

The shock Theophanes expressed at Nicephorus' reforms shows how accepted these abuses had become, and his indignation suggests that the reforms were in large measure successful. As a monk from a family of rich officials, Theophanes was outraged when Nicephorus abruptly increased the tax burden of the church, the rich, and the officials. When he wrote, of course, the measures were still new, and he may have hoped to persuade the newly crowned Leo V to modify or reverse them. Although Theophanes considered

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[65] Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 486. 23-26, 487. 13-16, 486. 28-29, 487. 2-5, 489. 24-27, 487. 17-19.

[66] For this interpretation, see E. Frances, "L'empereur Nicéphore 1er et le commerce maritime byzantine", *Byzantinoslavica*, 27 (1966): 41-47. Frances has taken issue, I think correctly, with Bury and Brătianu; see Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire, 216-17*; and Brătianu, *Études byzantines d'histoire économique et sociale*, 208-09.

Nicephorus harsh in his financial measures[67], the emperor does not seem to have raised the basic rates of any taxes. Rather, he applied the taxes equally to all groups, a practice that Theophanes thought was itself outrageous. Raising more revenue more equitably meant fewer bankruptcies and less abandonment of land.

Theophanes praised Michael I Rhangabe (811-13) for his generosity in spending the gold that Nicephorus had amassed, but the *Chronographia* does not indicate that Michael made any changes in the system of taxation[68]. His successors apparently continued Nicephorus' reforms, and, once they became established, no one seems to have found them oppressive. Leo V was praised for his fiscal management, Michael II for temporarily remitting part of the hearth taxes during the civil war of 821-23, and Theophilus for his justice and concern for his subjects' welfare[69]. All three emperors were iconoclasts, yet in this respect they are praised by our iconophile sources. Furthermore, by 856, despite frequent wars and heavy building expenditures, we find the large sum of one hundred and nine thousand pounds of gold in the treasury[70].

The difference in the empire's financial administration between the eighth and the ninth century cannot be adequately explained by blaming the policies of the eighth-century emperors. Leo III made at least a halting attempt at a census in 733. Constantine V certainly tried to make the church lands yield revenue by his confiscations. According to Theodore of Studius, at least the port and market duties were strictly collected before Irene's reign[71]. Although Irene's remissions of taxes may have been irresponsible, Theophanes dates them only a year and a half before her overthrow by Nicephorus I, while most of the abuses Nicephorus reformed went back at least eleven more years (the period for which he demanded back taxes), and probably more. To be sure, Nicephorus I was a trained financier and a capable

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[67] Nicephorus allegedly confiscated certain church lands and then demanded that the church pay taxes on them; he also virtually confiscated the large fortune of a candle seller; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 487.30-488.6. But Theophanes may have suppressed justifying circumstances.

[68] Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 493-94.

[69] On Leo V, see Genesius, *Regum Libri Quattuor*, 1. 16; on Michael II, see Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, 54; and, on Theophilus, see *ibid.*, 87-88.

[70] For the accumulation of this surplus, see note 7, above.

[71] Theophanes mentioned only Leo's counting male infants, but he may have omitted others who were counted in order to strengthen his comparison of Leo with the Pharaoh of Exodus; *Chronographia*, 410. Also see Theodore, in *Patrologia Graeca*, 99: cols. 929B-933c.

one at that, but his appearance at about this time does not seem to be a pure accident.

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By 802, the beginning of Nicephorus' reign, the revival of learning had been going on for about twenty years. The minuscule hand had some currency, and the number of educated Byzantines had risen considerably. In his way Nicephorus I was part of this phenomenon. As a former iconophile civil servant with a good practical education, he worked with the scholarly Patriarch Tarasius and appointed the scholarly Patriarch Nicephorus to office. Nicephorus I naturally benefited from having better-educated civil servants under him, and it is hard to believe that he did not make an effort to appoint well-educated men as his officials, probably while he was still finance minister. It is a reasonable, if unprovable, conjecture that Nicephorus introduced the minuscule hand into the imperial chancery, with the increase in efficiency that that entailed[72]. He waited several years after his accession to make his reforms, which gave him time to prepare his civil service for the task. When he had compiled fairly adequate records, he was in a position to demand back taxes, curtail fraud and bribery, and close loopholes in the tax system. (Corruption is, of course, far easier to conceal when records are poor.) Even if the rulers of the eighth century had had Nicephorus' ideas of efficiency – and they apparently did not – they did not have a bureaucracy of the quality that he had, and their efforts would have been hampered accordingly. Nicephorus' successors evidently had still better officials. Leo V was praised for appointing "first-rate secretaries" to keep his accounts and provincial officials who did not embezzle[73].

The effects of rising education and literacy on the army would have been felt more slowly, since changes would have had to spread from the capital to the provinces and reach a group that had less incentive to become educated than civil servants had. Yet, as Browning has observed, many Byzantine military officers were educated – and needed to be. The Byzantine army had to depend largely on written orders and requisitions of supplies, which the illiterate would be unable to prepare or understand, and the

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[72] Minuscule was probably too new to have been introduced before Nicephorus' ministry; see Irigoin, "Survie et renouveau de la littérature antique à Constantinople", 288. But it had long been in use for records by the reign of Basil I (867-80); see Browning, "Literacy in the Byzantine World", 51.

[73] Genesius, *Regum Libri Quattuor*, 1.16.

semiliterate might misunderstand or prepare incorrectly. As literacy spread, this situation must have improved. The epic hero Digenes Acrites, among his other exploits, studied for "three whole years" and learned to read and write. Consequently, when Emperor Basil (I?) wrote to him, the hero understood and was able to write back eloquently[74]. But there must have been times when officers did not understand written orders and were, therefore, of no use in campaigns; such cases must have been more common before the ninth century. Certainly, increased literacy was not the main reason for the Byzantine military resurgence in the mid-ninth century; the economic recovery and the decline of the caliphate were definitely more important. Still, it is hard to believe that an increase in the functional literacy of the military did not occur at this time and that this increase did not improve military efficiency.

We should be careful not to overdraw the case. Just how much education and literacy spread in Byzantium from the late eighth century cannot be estimated with any precision, nor can just what effect this increase had on the state be measured. A comparative study of inscriptions would provide some basis for assessing literacy if the inscriptions were collected systematically and dated, but this has not yet been done. Presumably, eighth-century inscriptions and graffiti had more grammatical errors and misspellings than those of the ninth century; but how great the difference might be is not yet known. Saints' lives can also be exploited further as sources for literacy and education. The collections of letters of the ninth century, particularly those of Theodore of Studius and Ignatius the Deacon, should yield more information when their contents are thoroughly examined.[75] Even the chronicles may contribute something more if studied closely with this question in mind. Naturally, chancery documents of this period would provide the best evidence, and they are not extant. But further study of the Byzantine economy and government, both from later written sources and from coins and seals, should add detail to the picture of all aspects of the middle Byzantine revival[76].

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[74] Browning, "Literacy in the Byzantine World", 42-44; and John Mavrogordato, ed. and trans., *Digenes Acrites*, Grottaferrata version (Oxford, 1956), 70-71, 132-35 (bk. 4, 11. 66-69, 971-1003).

[75] [Besides Fatouros' new edition of Theodore's letters, note the new edition of the letters of Ignatius by Cyril Mango, *The Correspondence of Ignatios the Deacon: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (*Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*; Washington, 1997).]

[76] [I often returned to these themes in Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival.*]

Much, however, is now known about the origins, nature, and effects of that revival. Beginning with the late eighth century, the educated class in Byzantium, which was also the ruling class, increased its scholarly activity, producing leading scholars of greater distinction, ordinary members of better education, and newly recruited members in greater numbers. In its early stages attributable to the challenge of iconoclasm, this increase in scholarly activity soon gathered independent momentum. As the Byzantine ruling class became better educated, it became better able to perform its administrative functions.

This did not necessarily mean that it would do so; it could simply have used its new skills to increase its own wealth and power at the expense of the state. But Emperor Nicephorus I, himself a member of this class and thoroughly familiar with the workings of the government, made a major effort to convert his better-educated civil service into a more efficient one. In this he was largely successful, and his successors continued what he had begun. Thus, in the ninth century the empire's diplomacy was more effective, its taxes were more equitably assessed and more efficiently collected, its army functioned better, and its whole administration was tightened and improved. How much difference these changes made cannot be estimated with any precision, but it seems to have been significant. Combined with other favorable circumstances, the changes led to the revival of the middle Byzantine state.

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THE BRIDE-SHOWS OF THE BYZANTINE EMPERORS*

Five times between 788 and 882, the consort of the Byzantine emperor or of the heir to the Byzantine throne was chosen in a competition of beautiful women from all over the Empire. The custom, which is well attested by a variety of sources, is unquestionably historical; but many historians seem to have trouble taking it seriously. Modern studies of the shows have been primarily concerned with their influence on folklore[1]. In one of the few surveys of Byzantine history to mention bride-shows at all, Romilly Jenkins seems to dismiss their historical importance with the remark. "Needless to say, the election was nearly always rigged, the result being arranged beforehand"[2].

The results of the shows, however, whether arranged beforehand or not, had political impact. When Constantine VI repudiated the winner of his show and married again, the resulting controversy soon caused his fall from power. The next show, held by Nicephorus I, was itself the cause of some scandal. Another show left the iconoclast Theophilus with an iconophile wife, Theodora, who repudiated iconoclasm soon after he died. Her son, Michael III, ignored the wife who won his bride-show and kept a mistress, with dynastic consequences that are still difficult to untangle. Finally, Leo VI made the first of his four disastrous marriages with St. Theophano, who was selected in a bride-show. In this article, I propose to consider each of these five shows in turn, reviewing in passing the other imperial marriages of the period as a context.

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* An earlier version of this article was written in a seminar at Harvard University under Professor Ihor Ševčenko, who made a number of helpful comments on it. [This article provoked a lively controversy over the historicity of bride-shows, which is discussed in Study 19 in this book.]

[1] See Photeine P. Bourboulis, *Studies in the History of Modern Greek Story-Motives (Hellenika* suppl. 2, Thessalonica. 1953), and Herbert Hunger, "Die Schönheitskonkurrenz in 'Belthandros und Chrysantza' und die Brautschau am byzantinischen Kaiserhof", *Byzantion.* 35 (1965), 150-158.

[2] *Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries, A.D. 610-1071* (New York. 1966), 98.

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In the middle of the year 788, Charlemagne decided to break a pledge he had given some years before to marry his young daughter Rotrud to the Emperor Constantine VI, by then eighteen years old[3]. Charlemagne's motives seem to have been personal, not political: he was so much attached to all his daughters that he could never bring himself to marry any of them off, even to his own nobles, much less to a foreign ruler at the other end of Christendom[4]. But the Empress Irene, who had requested the match for her son in the first place, took political offense. Breaking off her alliance with Charlemagne, she sent a Byzantine army to attack his ally, the Lombard Duke of Benevento. Then she took measures to find a wife for her son elsewhere[5].

Such is the story that follows from the Eastern and Western sources. Though some have thought that Irene was the one who broke the engagement, the *Annals* of Einhard record that in 788 the Emperor Constantine (by whom we should understand the Byzantine government, run by his mother) sent an army against Benevento because he was angry at being refused Charlemagne's daughter[6]. The *Chronographia* of Theophanes records that in 788 Irene broke "the treaty with the Franks" (τὴν πρὸς τοὺς Φράγγους συναλλαγήν), arranged another marriage for her son, and sent the army against Benevento[7]. Thus both chroniclers agree that it was the Byzantines who broke the peace; the Frankish source says that the Franks were the ones who broke the engagement, while the Byzantine source does no more than imply the contrary by using the ambiguous word συναλλαγή, which could mean "marriage contract". No doubt Irene, and her partisan Theophanes, did not want to publicize that she had been snubbed by the Franks. But her anger at the snub is the only apparent reason for her attack on Benevento.

Disappointed in her project to make a brilliant match for her son in the West, Irene decided to make a brilliant match for him in Byzantium. To that end, she sent out a delegation of judges headed by the Protospatharius Theophanes to search the whole Empire for women worthy of Constantine's

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[3] Cf. Einhard, *Annales*, *MGHSS*. I. 175. On the pledge, see Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. Karl de Boor (Leipzig. 1883), 455. Constantine was born on January 14. 770 (Theoph., 445), and Rotrud could hardly have been born before 773; cf. Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*. ed. Louis Halphen, 4th ed. (Paris, 1967), 54 and n. 5. and 56.

[4] Einhard, *Vita.* 62.

[5] Theoph., 463.

[6] Einhard, *Annales,* 175.

[7] Theoph., 463-464.

hand, and to bring them back for a final judging in Constantinople[8]. In this period of scanty sources, only one source mentions the event, but it is a good one: the *Life of St. Philaretus the Almsgiver,* written in 821 or 822 by Nicetas of Amnia, the cousin of the winning contestant[9]. Since no source mentions an imperial bride-show before 788, it was probably Irene who inaugurated the custom as an assertion of imperial pride and self-sufficiency, to show that her son could marry well without help from the untrustworthy and barbaric Franks.

Though Photeine Bourboulis, followed by Jenkins, conjectured that the bride-show was a Khazar custom transmitted to Byzantium by Irene's mother-in-law, Irene the Khazar, this conjecture is too rickety to stand[10]. In the first place, there is no evidence that the Khazars held bride-shows. On the contrary, an Arab who wrote in 922 notes that the Khazar Khagan was polygamous, making dynastic marriages with the daughters of all the kings subject to him[11]. In the second place, as Bourboulis admits, Irene the Khazar was probably dead by the time her son Leo IV married the later Empress Irene, so that the "custom" could not have been passed on directly. The conjecture of J. B. Bury, favored by Bourboulis, that Leo married Irene in 768 as the result of a show, is not supported by Theophanes, who says that Irene arrived at Constantinople in pomp, accompanied by a regatta and welcomed by the principal men of the city[12]. This sounds like treatment for an affianced imperial bride, not for one of several bride-show contestants. Bourboulis' suggestion that Irene the Khazar may have told her son Leo who may have told his wife Irene about the bride-shows that may have been held by the Khazars is neither convincing nor necessary. The idea of choosing the best and most beautiful wife for an emperor through a competition is not so ingenious that Irene and her advisers could not have thought it up for themselves, perhaps inspired by the bride-show of Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther (2:24).

So it happened that, according to the *Life of Philaretus*, Irene's judges searched "all the West, South, and North" of the Empire without finding any

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[8] The source for Theophanes' name is Theoph., 463.

[9] See M.-H. Fourmy and M. Leroy, "La vie de S. Philarète", *Byzantion.* 9 (1934). 98.

[10] Bourboulis, *Studies.* 35 ; cf. Jenkins, *Byzantium.* 98.

[11] D. M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars* (Princeton, 1954), 109-110 ; cf. 100 for the date.

[12] J. B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire* (London, 1912). 81; Theoph., 444.

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suitable young ladies. This left them with no place to look but the East, where they accordingly began with the region of the Pontus. Passing through inland Paphlagonia, they arrived at the village of Amnia, near the town of Gangra. The envoys do not appear to have extended their search to the lower classes, but made straight for the magnificent old mansion of Philaretus, a local magnate who had recently ruined himself by extravagant almsgiving. Though they were warned by the villagers that Philaretus was poor, the envoys assumed that this was a story he was circulating to keep them from lodging at his house at his expense. Philaretus received them warmly and, with the help of the principal villagers, managed to entertain them sumptuously. The envoys then got down to business, asking Philaretus if he had any daughters. Though naturally the saint kept the women of his household confined to the women's quarters, he granted the judges permission to see them there.

When they saw Philaretus' daughters and granddaughters, the judges were dazzled by their beauty, and particularly by their modesty. Since the daughters were married, the panel turned to the three granddaughters, Maria, Myranthia, and Euanthia. In accordance with the Empress's instructions, the judges put them to three tests, measuring their height against an ideal measure, comparing their faces to an ideal portrait, and measuring their shoes against an ideal shoe size, presumably a small one. All three granddaughters qualified as finalists, and their family accompanied them to Constantinople for the show. The judges seem to have had better luck finding candidates who met their tests after they met Philaretus, because ten other finalists were also chosen. They included a rich and beautiful girl identified only as "the daughter of Gerontianus", who spurned Maria's suggestion for a friendly agreement among the contestants, observing, "I know for sure that I am the richest, best-born, and best-formed, and the Emperor will choose *me*".

In the competition itself, the Empress Irene, the Logothete Stauracius, and Constantine VI considered each finalist in turn. The *Life* says,

> When the Imperial envoys arrived in Byzantium, they first presented the daughter of Gerontianus. When the Emperor and his mother the Empress saw her, they said to her, "You are good and beautiful, but you will not do for the Emperor". Giving her gifts, they sent her away. Similarly, when they looked at the rest one by one, they were not satisfied. Giving them gifts as well, they sent them away. Last of all, the daughter of the old Almsgiver entered with her three daughters. When they saw them, the Emperor, his mother, and Stauracius, the head of the government, were ecstatic at their beauty and delighted by their dress, intelligence, and grace.

> Then and there the Emperor was betrothed to the eldest [Maria], and one of his greatest courtiers, a patrician named Constantinacius, himself handsome and very well-formed, was betrothed to the second [Myranthia][13]).

Theophanes records that the marriage of Constantine and Maria took place in November of 788[14]. Some time later, the third daughter, Euanthia, was married to Grimoald, the Duke of Benevento, as part of a new alliance between Byzantium and the Lombards[15]. St. Philaretus was given the rank of consul, and his whole family were provided with riches and houses in Constantinople[16].

Although Theophanes does not mention that Constantine married Maria as the result of a show, he gives two pieces of information about the marriage that Nicetas, as Maria's cousin, understandably suppressed. Theophanes says that Irene forced Constantine to marry Maria much against his will, because of his "love" (σχέσις) for Charlemagne's daughter Rotrud[17]. This is not very difficult to reconcile with Nicetas' story, which makes Irene and Stauracius principals in the judging. While Constantine had never seen Rotrud, she had been taught some Greek and could have written him letters; the support that her powerful father could have given him against his domineering mother may have encouraged his passion[18]. Maria's family had no power of their own and owed everything to Irene.

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[13] Fourmy and Leroy, "Vie", 135-143. I do not agree with the editors' first addition to their text (143.6-7) from the later, classicizing version of the *Life* edited by A. A. Vasiliev, *IRAIK*, 5 (1900), 77.17-18, because this requires a further change in the text, making Stauracius the one who did the judging; but at 143.14-15 their addition of the mention of Stauracius from Vasiliev's text seems likely to be right. At 143.16, read εὔσχημον (cf. Vasiliev, 77.25) for σύσχημον.

[14] Theoph., 463; a variant says November 12, but this is presumably a corruption of November of the twelfth indiction, the date given in the other MSS.

[15] Erchempert, *Historia Langobardorum Beneventanorum*, *MGHScriptRerLangob* (Hannover, 1878), 236, where Euanthia is called Wantia. For a discussion of this marriage, which is misreported somewhat by both Eastern and Western sources, see Hans Belting, "Studien zum Beneventanischen Hof im 8. Jahrhundert", *DOP*. 16 (1962), 148.

[16] Fourmy and Leroy, "Vie", 143-151.

[17] Theoph., 463.

[18] A Byzantine tutor had been teaching Rotrud to write and speak Greek since her engagement (Theoph., 455).

Constantine came to hate Maria, though she bore him two daughters[19]. The second fact that Theophanes mentions but Nicetas suppresses is that in 895, four years after the deposition of Irene and Stauracius and three years after the death of St. Philaretus, Constantine repudiated Maria and relegated her to a convent with her daughters[20]. According to Theophanes, Irene actually encouraged her son to divorce Maria in the hope that it would make him unpopular[21]. That it did. His excuse that Maria had been trying to poison him met with general disbelief[22]. When he remarried the next year, he outraged the Church and people by his adultery, starting the so-called Moechian Controversy that led to his downfall the following year. The controversy dragged on for years longer as an ecclesiastical dispute. Such was the unhappy ending of the first bride-show marriage.

Irene, who ruled by herself from 797 to 802 after deposing her son, held no bridegroom-show, but briefly considered marrying Charlemagne[23]. In 802, she was overthrown by Nicephorus I. Because the chroniclers do not mention his wife and the lists of imperial tombs do not mention a tomb for her, it seems safe to conclude that she died before he became emperor[24]. Nicephorus, who already had a son and heir, does not seem to have felt the need of a new wife for himself, but in 807 he held the second known bride-show for his son Stauracius.

Theophanes, by now a contemporary, tells the story in words that can hardly be improved upon:

> On December twentieth, after Nicephorus had made a wide selection of girls from all the Empire under his rule so that his son Stauracius might marry, it was Theophano of Athens, a relative of

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[19] Euphrosyne, who is mentioned below, and Irene (Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Ceremoniis*, Bonn, ed. [1829], 647).

[20] See Theoph., 466, on the deposition of Irene and Stauracius, and Fourmy and Leroy, "Vie", 98, on the death of Philaretus.

[21] Theoph., 469.

[22] Ignatius the Deacon, *Vita Tarasii.* ed. I. A. Heikel, *Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicae*, 17 (1891), 408-409.

[23] Theoph., 475.

[24] Her name was Procopia according to the *Necrologium* translated by Philip Grierson, "The Tombs and Obits of the Byzantine Emperors", *DOP,* 16 (1962). 55. Grierson thinks that this is a confusion with Nicephorus' *daughter* Procopia, the wife of Michael I; but since the compiler did know that Michael I's wife was named Procopia, I am inclined to think that the daughter was named after her mother.

> the blessed Irene, although she was engaged to another man and had slept with him many times, whom, having separated her from him, Nicephorus married to the pitiful Stauracius, for Nicephorus broke laws shamelessly in this as in all other cases. The rascal, having selected along with her two other girls who were more beautiful, openly debauched them during the very days of the wedding. He was laughed at by all[25].

Since Theophanes did not like Nicephorus very much, we do not have to put quite as unfavorable a construction on this bride-show as he does. It is improbable that a man who was carrying on with two of the most beautiful girls in the Empire would have been laughed at by anyone. It does seem likely, however, that the father, not the son, was the one who chose the winner – as Irene had done for Constantine. It is also reasonable to suppose that Nicephorus chose Theophano because she was a relative of the deposed Empress Irene, with whom he wanted to connect his new dynasty. Irene, after all, was not only a member by marriage of the Isaurian Dynasty, which had ruled for eighty-six years with considerable military success, but was (and still is) revered by the Eastern Church as a saint for her restoration of the veneration of icons. If Theophano was engaged to someone else, or was no better than she should have been, these would have been secondary considerations for Nicephorus. Some have argued that he saw them as positive advantages, either because he was eager to defy the Church by breaking an engagement or because he was trying to put some spirit into the timid Stauracius by marrying him to the free-loving Theophano[26]. But these rather fanciful ideas become superfluous as soon as Nicephorus' dynastic motive is admitted.

After the brief reign of Stauracius in 811, Michael I Rhangabe became emperor because he had already married Nicephorus' daughter Procopia. (Theophano was frustrated in her hopes to succeed her husband, who had been fatally wounded in battle.) Leo V the Armenian, who overthrew Michael in 813 and was himself murdered in 820, had also married before his accession. Michael's and Leo's sons, probably because of their youth, were still unmarried when their fathers fell[27]. Although Michael II the Stammerer,

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[25] Theoph., 483.

[26] Bury (*Eastern Roman Empire.* 15) likes the first idea; Fourmy and Leroy ("Vie", 103) and Bourbouilis *(Studies*, 13-14) prefer the second.

[27] The eldest of Michael's sons was twenty in 813, when he and his brothers were castrated (Theophanes Continuatus, Bonn, ed. [1838], 20). Leo's sons were

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Leo's murderer, was already married on his accession, his wife died during his reign and he decided to take another. He did not, however, hold a bride-show for himself, probably because he did not want to make a spectacle of a second marriage, which was disapproved but not forbidden by the Church. He married Euphrosyne, a daughter of Constantine VI by Maria of Amnia. Though Euphrosyne, like her mother, had been made a nun in a convent on the island of Principo, the Patriarch released her from her vows so that this dynastic union could take place[28].

When Michael II died in 829, his young son Theophilus, who ruled together with his stepmother Euphrosyne, was still unmarried. Euphrosyne, whose mother Maria had won the first bride-show, herself held a show for Theophilus in 830, when he was seventeen. As the chronicler Symeon the Logothete tells the story, she,

> having sent out into all the themes, summoned beautiful girls so that her son [actually stepson] Theophilus might marry. Escorting them into the Palace, to the triclinium called the Pearl, she gave Theophilus a golden apple, and said. "Give this to whichever one you like". Among the girls of noble birth was an extremely beautiful girl named Cassia. Seeing her and admiring her greatly for her beauty, Theophilus said, "Yet
>
> Through a woman evils came to man".
>
> She, though modestly, replied, "But
>
> Through a woman better things began".
>
> He, wounded in his heart by her reply, passed her by and gave the apple to Theodora, a Paphlagonian girl.

Cassia, undaunted by the unfavorable reception her poetic sally had received, founded a convent and became a poetess; her hymns and epigrams still survive. Theophilus married Theodora on Pentecost (June 5, 830). After her stepson's marriage, Euphrosyne too founded a convent and retired to it, leaving Theophilus to rule alone[29].

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castrated in 820; his eldest son Constantine was still a little boy when he was crowned on Christmas 813 (Scriptor Incertus. Bonn. ed. with Leo Grammaticus [1842], 346).

[28] Bury, *Eastern Roman Empire.* 110-111.

[29] The text of Symeon is given by Leo Grammaticus, Bonn, ed. (1824), 213-214; cf. the Pseudo-Symeon ("Symeon Magister"), Bonn. ed. (1838), 624-625. See also n. 30.

In contradiction to the evidence of the sources, many historians have adopted the conjecture that this bride-show was held in 821, not 830, and by Theophilus' mother Thecla, not his stepmother Euphrosyne. Recently I have argued that this theory is impossible, and that there is no reason not to accept the story as the Logothete tells it[30]. In particular, the circumstances leave little doubt that Euphrosyne not only held the show, continuing the tradition that had elevated her mother, but discreetly rigged it.

The circumstantial case is this. Theophilus was an enthusiastic iconoclast, who began martyring iconophiles the year after his marriage[31]. But Theodora, the wife he chose, was an equally devoted iconophile, who used to venerate icons even during her husband's reign and had iconoclasm condemned soon after his death[32]. Furthermore, Cassia, the only other contestant named in the sources, was also an iconophile, as her hymns show[33]. How had these iconophile women come to appear in the bride-show of the iconoclast Theophilus? They had been selected by Euphrosyne, who was the descendant of the iconophile saints Philaretus and Irene, the product of an iconophile convent, and a correspondent of St. Theodore of Studius, the leader of the iconophiles. Even during Theophilus' reign Euphrosyne taught her stepson's little daughters to venerate icons. The almost inescapable conclusion is that she deliberately chose iconophiles for the show. Before the show she may also have advised Theophilus to choose Theodora, who, like Euphrosyne, came from the provincial gentry of Paphlagonia. The thing was so subtly done that not even the iconophile chroniclers, writing long after the fact, noticed that, while ostensibly giving Theophilus a free choice, his stepmother had arranged for him to marry a woman of the religious party opposed to his own[34].

After Theophilus died in 842, Theodora ruled in the name of her two-year-old son, Michael III. Michael was a problem child. By 855, when he was

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[30] See Warren T. Treadgold, "The Problem of the Marriage of the Emperor Theophilus", *GRBS*, 16 (1975). 325-341, for a full discussion of the marriage and the problem.

[31] He martyred St. Euthymius of Sardis on December 26, 831, according to J. Gouillard, "Une oeuvre inédite du Patriarche Méthode", *BZ*, 53 (1960), which should also have been cited in Treadgold, "Problem", 336, n. 47.

[32] On her veneration of icons during Theophilus' reign, see Ps.-Sym., 629-630, and Theoph. Cont., 91-92.

[33] On Cassia, see Ilse Rochow, *Studien zu der Person, den Werken und dem Nachleben der Dichterin Kassia* (Berlin, 1967), though in my opinion Rochow's discussion of the bride-show of 830 (*Kassia*, 6-10) has gone astray.

[34] See Treadgold, "Problem", 338-340.

fifteen, he already had a mistress, Eudocia Ingerina, who, to make matters worse, seems to have come from an iconoclast family[35]. In these circumstances, Theodora decided to hold a bride-show for him. The *Life of St. Irene the Younger*, which is anonymous but probably early, tells the story.

> She and her son Michael, whom she considered the heir to the Empire, decided that he should take a wife from the ranks of the illustrious and respectable, of a family pious and famous for its orthodox faith—a girl distinguished by the quality of her virtue and eminent for both the nobility of her soul and the beauty of her body, and surpassing the other girls of her age. On this account, proclamations were sent throughout all the land that was subject to the Empire of the Romans.

The emphasis in the qualifications on a pious and orthodox family, and on virtue in general, may well have been added by Theodora to disqualify Eudocia.

"Therefore", the *Life* continues,

> while various people from various places who were bringing up young women prepared them and sent them to the capital, the parents of the wonderful Irene, because she was so famous for the beauty of her soul and the attractiveness of her body, sent her from her native Cappadocia, outfitting her very expensively and appropriately, to Constantinople, and with her her sister ...

Though she was from the provinces, Irene was of a noble and wealthy family, the Guberii, and when she and her sister arrived in the capital they were met by a number of prominent relatives who lived there, some of them high government officials. At least among her relatives, Irene was considered the leading candidate for Michael's hand[36]. Perhaps because Michael had some influence over the selection process, Eudocia Ingerina was allowed to compete. No less knowledgeable a source than her son Leo VI says of her

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[35] Cyril Mango, "Eudocia Ingerina, the Normans, and the Macedonian Dynasty". *ZVI,* 14-15 (1973), 17-21.

[36] *Vita Irenes*, *ActaSSJuly* VI, 603-604.

that, when Michael was old enough to marry, "women distinguished in beauty were brought from every place, among whom she too was chosen ..."[37].

Exactly how the show was held is not recorded, but Symeon the Logothete says that Theodora and her co-regent, the Logothete Theoctistus, forced the rejection of Eudocia Ingerina "because of her shamelessness" (δι' ἀναίδειαν) and forced the choice of another Eudocia, the daughter of an otherwise unknown Decapolites[38]. If Bury is right that Theodora and Theoctistus chose Eudocia Decapolitissa because they thought she would be easy to control, they judged her shrewdly[39]. During the twelve years of her marriage with Michael, she never did anything to cause any of our sources so much as to mention her name. Among the defeated contestants, Irene Guberina became a nun, abbess of the Convent of Chrysobalantum, and finally a saint, while her sister married Bardas, Michael's uncle[40]. As for Eudocia Ingerina, Michael continued his affair with her as if his marriage had never happened. He had Theoctistus murdered later the same year and deposed Theodora early in the next[41]; it is hard to believe that resentment over the marriage they had imposed upon him was not one of his reasons for doing away with them. Though they had been able to rig the show itself, its result rebounded upon them.

In 866, according to a persuasive argument put together by Cyril Mango, Michael arranged for his first child by Eudocia Ingerina to be legitimate and imperial by marrying the pregnant Eudocia to Basil the Macedonian, whom he made co-emperor[42]. Consequently, when Basil murdered Michael in 867 and became sole emperor, he was already married to Eudocia. Though he had had a son by an earlier marriage, this son died in 879, leaving Leo the Wise, actually a son of Michael's by Eudocia, the heir to the throne. Eudocia had no particular reason to like bride-shows, since Theodora had tried to separate her from Michael III by means of one; but by

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[37] A. Vogt and I. Hausherr, "Oraison funèbre de Basile I", *OCP*, 26 (1932). 54.

[38] Leo Gramm. (= Symeon the Logothete). 229-230 ; cf. PS.-SYM., 655.

[39] Bury, *Eastern Roman Empire*, 156.

[40] *Vita Irenes.* 604. Though the *Vita* states that on the way to Constantinople Irene had met St. Joannicius, who prophesied that she would become abbess of this convent, here the hagiographer seems to have got carried away, because Joannicius had died nine years earlier, in 846 (*BHG*^{3}, II. 35).

[41] Theoctistus was murdered on November 20, 855, and Michael was proclaimed sole emperor in March of 856, according to Henri Grégoire (*CMH*^{2} IV. 1. 108 and n. 2).

[42] Mango, "Eudocia Ingerina", 22-24.

this time the custom seems to have taken firm hold, and in 882 she held a show for Leo, who was soon to turn sixteen[43].

The only source for this show is the *Life of St. Theophano*, which purports to be, and probably was, written by a friend of an uncle of the winning contestant[44]. The account in the *Life* is worth repeating at some length:

> ... A search was made for attractive girls, brilliant in their virtues, in order to select one of them for a harmonious union with the Emperor Leo the Wise, [Basil's] first son and co-ruler. ... Archons, satraps, and exarchs of the Secret Bedchamber were sent out by the Emperor [Basil] to every city and district to seek a girl worthy of the most handsome Emperor [Leo]. They brought various girls from various places to the capital. One had fault found with the beauty of her appearance, and another had fault found with the bloom of her youth, for there was another who was chosen by God, even though she was kept hidden for a short time. Eudocia, the most pious Augusta and the consort of the great and glorious Emperor [Basil], decided also to choose some young and beautiful girls from her own country for this purpose, among whom the excellent Theophano was also selected. It happened that of all these only twelve were chosen, and they assembled in a certain imperial apartment of the famous Magnaura [Palace], stayed there, and waited for the arrival of the Emperor [Basil] and the Augusta[45].

At this point the *Life* reports that one of the contestants, a girl from Athens who had been taught divination, prophesied that the one who put on her shoes first when the Emperor and Empress arrived would be the winner. Naturally, Theophano was first.

> The Augusta, seeing her and being pleased with the alacrity of her spirit, and also noticing the beauty of her face from a distance, left

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[43] For the date of the marriage, see Romilly Jenkins, "The Chronological Accuracy of the 'Logothete' for the Years A.D. 867-913", *DOP.* 19 (1965), 101 and n. 46. The show was held not long before; see Eduard Kurtz, *Zwei griechische Texte über die Hl. Theophano, die Gemählin Kaisers Leo VI (Zapiski imp. Akademii Nauk* 8, Series Ist.-filol. otd. III/2 [St. Petersburg, 1898]). 6.

[44] Kurtz, *Zwei Texte.* 21.

[45] Kurtz, *Zwei Texte.* 5.

> all the rest and came up to her and to her alone. When she came near to her, she discovered her beauty, her family, and her birthplace. Since she knew her to be born of imperial blood, she separated her from all the rest and, taking her hand, brought her to the Emperor [Basil]. Making a trial of the others also, she took another two besides her, the one from Athens and one known to be the daughter of a tribune. And, having presented all the rest with gifts and much money, she told them to return to their homes. Then she took only those three with her to the Palace and made a trial of them in the bath. When she saw that the beauty of the saint greatly surpassed the others', she clothed her in imperial garments and, taking her by the right hand, went before Basil, the emperor and her consort. Casting her at his feet, she pronounced her a worthy bride for his son. And the Emperor [Leo], himself also amazed by the unexceptionable beauty of the girl, took from the fold of his robe his little ring fashioned from jasper and put it on the young lady's hand. From that time, the new empress-elect, taking the pledges of betrothal, lived with her most pious Augusta and mother-in-law as with a mother[46].

The wedding took place soon afterward.

If this story is basically correct – and it is impressively circumstantial – Leo did not even see Theophano until his mother and father had already selected her. Though perhaps it was too much for him to expect to have a look at the candidates when they were naked in the bath (γυμνάσιον), he could reasonably have expected to see more of them than the fully chosen and fully clothed Theophano. In fact, he later told St. Euthymius, "All the senators know that I did not marry her of my own free will, but out of fear of my father, and greatly distressed"[47]. Evidently the choice was made by Eudocia and enforced by Basil. Eudocia seems to have seen in Theophano a reliable supporter of her own, not least because Theophano was a member of Eudocia's own family, the illustrious Martinacii[48]. Eudocia died soon after

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[46] Kurtz, *Zwei Texte*, 6. The author uses βασιλεύς and ἄναξ indiscriminately to mean both Basil and Leo. I have deduced my bracketed identifications from the assumption that the emperor who gave Theophano the engagement ring must be Leo, who was amazed at her beauty as if he had never seen her before; therefore the emperor who went to see the contestants earlier with Eudocia must have been Basil.

[47] *Vila Euthymii*, ed. and trans. P. Karlin-Hayter (Brussels, 1970), 41.

[48] Cf. Theoph. Cont., 121, and Genesius, Bonn, ed. (1834). 70.

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the wedding and Basil died in 886[49]; but Leo had to suffer through fifteen years of marriage with the saint. After Theophano finally died in 897, he married his mistress of long standing[50]. When she and another wife also died, the unfortunate Emperor married a fourth time, starting the Tetragamist Controversy, because the Church forbade fourth marriages. Leo's bride-show of 882 is the last one recorded in the sources.

Bourboulis, again with the support of Jenkins, conjectured that Leo held another show for his third marriage in 900[51]. She based her conjecture solely on this statement of Theophanes Continuatus about Leo's third wife: "The Emperor brought a young and very beautiful girl from the Opsician Theme; her name was Eudocia"[52]. Bourboulis went on to conjecture that, because third marriages were condemned by canon law, this bride-show so shocked Byzantine sensibilities that the custom was discredited and never used again. But these two conjectures create an unnecessary paradox. Leo the Wise knew as well as anyone else that third marriages were controversial, a subject for strict penance and certainly not for the spectacle of a bride-show. Even if he had done something so imprudent, and caused a scandal notorious enough to have ended bride-shows for good, we may be sure that it would have been mentioned in some of the documents we possess that concern the Tetragamy. In any event, the words of Theophanes Continuatus prove nothing, since an emperor does not need a bride-show to find a beautiful woman to marry, or to bring her from a province not far from his capital.

If the conjectural shows are left out of account, the five bride-shows attested in the sources show a number of common characteristics. First, all were held either for a reigning senior emperor or for the heir to the senior imperial power. Basil I held a show only for Leo, the eldest survivor of his supposed sons, not for the younger ones, Stephen and Alexander. Second, all five shows were held for the first marriage of an emperor who had recently reached marriageable age. Constantine VI was eighteen, Theophilus seventeen, and Michael III and Leo VI fifteen; though Stauracius' age is not recorded, he is unlikely to have been much older. Third, all the shows were held by the young emperors' parents, who were also their co-regents. Four shows were held by mothers, if we count Theophilus' stepmother; since Stauracius' mother seems to have been dead, his father had to hold his show. Further, in every case the parents' wishes prevailed in the choice of the bride,

[49] Kurtz, *Zwei Texte*, 7.
[50] See Jenkins, "Chronological Accuracy", 104.
[51] Bourboulis, *Studies*, 37; cf. Jenkins, *Byzantium*, 215.
[52] Theoph. Cont., 364.

though their wishes were at least partly different from their sons' in every case but that of the passive Stauracius.

The contestants, of whom the sources give only a partial picture, had several things in common also. Beauty, of course. But moral character was also considered in the selection process. It is no coincidence that most of the source material for the shows comes from hagiography. Two of the winners, Theodora and Theophano, were later canonized, and two more were related to saints, Maria of Amnia to St. Philaretus and Theophano of Athens to St. Irene the Empress; St. Irene the Younger and the future nun and hymnodist Cassia were also strong contenders. In the shows of 855 and 882 a pious and virtuous life was a stated qualification. In the first of these, Theodora did not allow her son's mistress Eudocia Ingerina to be chosen; in the second, when Eudocia examined her own three finalists in the bath, she was probably checking on their moral qualifications as well as their beauty. The only show that was not morally edifying was that held by the Emperor Nicephorus, which may have been considerably misrepresented by our biased source.

With a candidate's sanctity went her religious orthodoxy, though naturally this meant the imperial parents' idea of orthodoxy, not the bridegroom's. According to probable conjectures, Euphrosyne wanted Theophilus to marry an iconophile, and Theodora wanted to keep Michael III from marrying an iconoclast. Finally – and no surprise – noble birth was necessary. Most of the contestants were demonstrably of the nobility, and none is known to have been lowborn. The lowest-born, like Maria of Amnia and Theodora, were the daughters of provincial magnates, while the highest-born, the two Theophanos, were from imperial families. In Michael III's show noble birth was a stated qualification. But wealth, never mentioned as a requirement, does not seem to have been one: Maria of Amnia's family was noble but impoverished, and none of the winners seem to have had particularly rich or powerful parents. Probably the emperor's parents saw no reason to have a daughter-in-law with independent political power. If she would modestly enhance the prestige of their thrones and dynasties, the shows served their purpose.

A bride-show, after all, is a piece of showmanship – a way of advertising all over the Empire that only the best and most beautiful woman is fit to marry the emperor of the Romans. For every show, the sources specify that candidates were brought from all parts of the Empire, and the distribution both of contestants and of winners really was a wide one, covering Athens,

Paphlagonia, and Cappadocia as well as Constantinople[53]. The empresses and emperors, and sometimes their highest-ranking advisers, judged the candidates with ceremony in the Palace. In 830, the Triclinium of the Pearl seems to have been built especially for Theophilus' show, and the golden apple, an inspired prop, was provided to recall the Judgment of Paris[54]. The defeated contestants could receive cash prizes or other gifts and make good matches elsewhere. In 855, St. Irene the Younger refused many good proposals, while her sister married the Caesar Bardas[55]. In general, the bride-shows encouraged the nobility to enter their daughters in competition for the emperor's hand, a salutary reminder that he was more important than they; among the people, the arrival of the traveling judges caused more good feeling toward the government than the arrival of the tax-collector; and news of the show made a better impression than news of the latest palace revolt. Chronicles, hagiography, and eventually folklore reflect the popularity of the whole spectacle[56].

By contrast, foreign marriage-alliances, to which the Empress Irene apparently invented the bride-show as an alternative, seemed demeaning to the emperors of the ninth and tenth centuries. In the mid-tenth century, Constantine Porphyrogenitus told his son Romanus II to claim that Constantine the Great had forbidden any of his successors to make a marriage alliance "with a nation of customs differing from and alien to those of the Roman order, especially with one that is infidel and unbaptized, unless it be with the Franks alone ...[57]. Although the Porphyrogenitus had to make an exception of the Franks because Romanus II had married a Provençal princess, even that marriage was a humiliating one, forced upon him by Romanus Lecapenus. Constantine also admits that Leo III had arranged a marriage with a Khazar princess, but he declares this to be the unlawful act

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[53] The contestants included two Athenians, four Paphlagonians, two Cappadocians, two Constantinopolitans, and others from unspecified other places; the winners were two Paphlagonians, an Athenian, a Constantinopolitan, and one of uncertain origin (Eudocia Decapolitissa; could her father Decapolites have come from the Cilician Decapolis?).

[54] On the Triclinium of the Pearl, see Treadgold, "Problem", 329.

[55] *Vita Irenes.* 604.

[56] See Bourboulis, *Studies*, 37-39, Hunger, "Schönheitskonkurrenz", and Rochow, *Kassia*, 73-81.

[57] Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. Gy. Moravcsik and trans. R. J. H. Jenkins (Washington, 1967), 70-77. I quote from Jenkins' translation.

of a notorious heretic[58]. He also condemns Romanus Lecapenus for marrying his granddaughter to Peter of Bulgaria. Despite what Constantine VII says, the Byzantines do not seem to have been quite as strongly opposed to giving princesses in marriage as they were to receiving them: later in the tenth century, John Tzimisces married his niece Theophano to the Western Emperor Otto II (a Frank, to be sure), and Basil II married his sister Anna to Vladimir of Kiev[59]. Nevertheless, from Constantine V (741-775), for whom Leo III made the Khazar marriage, to Michael VII (1071-1078), whose wife was probably an Alan, every marriage of a senior emperor or the heir to the senior imperial power was made with a Byzantine.

Why then was the bride-show of 882 the last one? Between 788 and 882, a show was held for every first marriage of a senior emperor or heir to the throne. How and why did the custom die out?

Alexander (912-913), the brother and successor of Leo VI, was already married on his accession, and childless. The next emperor, Leo's son Constantine VII (913-959), was forced to marry the daughter of Romanus I (920-944) to make Romanus' rule legitimate. Romanus himself, and his first son, were already married when Romanus became emperor. The first marriage of Romanus II (959-963), mentioned above, was made when Romanus I did not consider him the first heir to the throne. Though Charles Diehl suggested that Romanus II may have married his second wife Theophano as a result of a bride-show not recorded in the sources, this seems unlikely in view of the Byzantines' feelings about second marriages[60]. Nicephorus II (963-969) had to marry Theophano to connect himself with the legitimate dynasty, and John I (969-976) had to marry Constantine VII's daughter Theodora for the same reason. Basil II (976-1025) never married at all, by his own choice. His brother Constantine VIII (1025-1028) had married before he became senior emperor, and had no sons. From 1028 to 1055, all the emperors had to marry Constantine's daughter Zoë to become emperors in the first place, except for Michael V, who was adopted by Zoë and did not marry. Michael VI (1056-1057), Isaac I (1057-1059), and Constantine X (1059-1067) had already been married before they became emperors.

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[58] Though Constantine says that Leo made the marriage for himself, he actually made it for his son, Constantine V.

[59] On Theophano's identity, see George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (rev. ed., New Brunswick, 1969), 296 and n. 2.

[60] Charles Diehl, *Figures byzantines*², I (Paris, 1906), 219. Theophano's low birth would also be untypical of bride-show contestants.

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Constantine X did have a son and heir, Michael VII, but we need not trouble ourselves much to find reasons for him not to hold a bride-show. Of course, the custom cannot have been entirely forgotten, because the chronicles, saints' lives, and folklore survived as records of it. But a custom that has not been used for some 175 years is no longer a custom. Any new bride-show would have been a deliberate revival, under conditions in many ways unlike those of the ninth century; for example, now that the emperor was not so clearly preeminent over the aristocracy and foreign rulers, regular alliances with them were more appropriate. In any event, we might better ask why Constantine should have revived the custom than why he did not.

In the cases in which bride-shows were held, emperors and empresses were succeeded by their sons without the intervention of non-dynastic rulers. Left free to marry their sons as they chose, these empresses and emperors made use of the custom to make marriages that conformed to their wishes, but at the same time made as brilliant an impression as possible. Though the dynastic complications of the tenth and early eleventh centuries presented no opportunities for shows, in their time bride-shows generally served the imperial parents well, even if they served the imperial bridegrooms rather less well. Admittedly, the shows were nearly always rigged, but that does not mean that they have no place in political history.

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BETWEEN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY: BYZANTINE PROPHECIES, STATISTICS, AND BRIDE-SHOWS

[The four papers that follow are much expanded versions of the four parts of a lecture that I originally delivered with the above title at the universities of Toronto and Oxford in 2001. What appears below are the introduction and conclusion of that original lecture, both of which remain applicable to the four papers in their revised form.]

Introduction

Social historians generally use different approaches from political historians. Though this division in approaches is often reasonable, it can also impoverish both social and political history, and prevent a full understanding of phenomena that involve both of them. Averil Cameron has illustrated the division by comparing the approaches to late ancient history of Peter Brown and the late A. H. M. Jones:

> Jones's approach was pragmatic and concrete; he was not very interested in the questions of religious history which many now regard as primary and exciting factors in the study of late antiquity. ... Brown is altogether more enthusiastic, not to say emotive, in emphasis; indeed, "late antiquity" is in danger of having become an exotic territory, populated by wild monks and excitable virgins and dominated by the clash of religions, mentalities and lifestyles. ... This very different perspective is, however, largely based on the evidence of religious and cultural development; whether it can be extended to economic and administrative history remains to be seen[1].

Historians are now so divided that most of them never consider such possibilities as religious motives for political acts, or political repercussions of religious texts.

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[1] Averil Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, A.D. 395-600* (London, 1993), p. 6.

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This lecture deals with four cases in which social and political history can illuminate each other. The first is the divination that predicted the successor of the emperor Valens (364-78), which social historians have neglected because it was political and political historians have disregarded because it seemed supernatural. The second case is the prophecies of the deaths of emperors attributed to the Patriarch of Constantinople Methodius I (843-47), which have been disbelieved or misunderstood for similar reasons. The third case is the many round numbers that various sources provide for the size and pay of the Byzantine army, which social historians have ignored and some political historians have rejected without considering Byzantine social conditions. The fourth case is the bride-shows staged to select wives for five middle Byzantine emperors, which have been considered literary motifs rather than historical facts by scholars who fail to see the shows' combination of social and political purposes.

Conclusion

Of course, few if any scholars at the beginning of the twenty-first century find beauty contests a sensible means of choosing wives for rulers, need round numbers to make large calculations easily, fear prophecies, or believe in divination. Yet we should not dismiss our sources simply because they show that medieval practices were not modern. Nor should political or social historians reject what their sources indicate simply because it belongs to the wrong kind of history. No historian should postulate literary motifs that came from nowhere, military arrangements that evolved by themselves, prophecies written by nobody, or divination without consequences. Every historian should realize that what was true of people in general also affected the elite who had identifiable names and participated in politics. The elite were people too, who sometimes shared, and always had to deal with, the majority's impressions, beliefs, or ignorance. Since people, sources, and reality never divided themselves neatly between social and political history, our understanding of the past should include both social and political factors.

PREDICTING THE ACCESSION OF THEODOSIUS I*

I. The Problem

In early 372 A.D. a pagan oracle predicted that the Christian emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, Valens (364-378), would be succeeded by a man whose name began with the Greek letters ΘΕΟΔ (THEOD). Seven years later, the prophecy came true: Valens' successor was Theodosius I (379-395). Taking power after the Goths had killed Valens in the catastrophic Battle of Adrianople (378), Theodosius restored the Eastern empire well enough that it could last another millennium. He defeated usurpers in the Western Roman Empire twice, Maximus in 388 and Eugenius in 394, and became the last Roman emperor to rule both East and West. A staunch Christian, Theodosius not only had the Arian heresy condemned at the Council of Constantinople of 381 but practically outlawed paganism by 392. His first anti-pagan law, in 381, forbade the sort of pagan divination that had foretold an emperor with a name like his[1].

In 372 Theodosius' accession would have seemed impossible to predict by any but supernatural means. He was then a junior officer aged about 25 who lived in the Western empire and had never set foot in the Eastern Empire he later ruled[2]. Even in 379, when he was chosen Eastern emperor by

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* A preliminary version of this article was presented at the universities of Toronto and Oxford as the first of four parts of a lecture, *Between Social and Political History: Byzantine Prophecies, Statistics, and Bride-Shows.* The other three parts, which discuss similar cases at the intersection of cultural, social, and political history, have now appeared in revised and expanded versions as *Standardized Numbers in the Byzantine Army,* War in History 12, 2005, 1-14; *The Prophecies of the Patriarch Methodius,* RÉByz 62, 2004, 229-237; and *The Historicity of Imperial Bride-Shows,* JÖByz 54, 2004, 39-52 [Studies 17, 18, and 19 in this book].

[1] The most recent survey of Theodosius' reign is S. Williams and G. Friell, *Theodosius: The Empire at Bay,* New Haven 1994. For broader overviews see A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey,* Oxford 1964, 138- 169, W. Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society,* Stanford 1997, 52-77 (with nn. 9 and 12 on the events discussed here), and J. Curran, *From Jovian to Theodosius,* in *CAH* XIII, 1998, 78-110. For the date of the THEOD oracle, which is often given as 371 or 371/72, see below, especially nn. 33 and 34.

[2] See *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* I, Cambridge, 1971 (hereafter *PLRE),* Theodosius 4.

the Western emperor Gratian (375-383, born 359), Theodosius was much younger and less experienced than a number of more eligible generals and officials. Stranger still, Gratian proclaimed Theodosius even though Theodosius' father had been executed on an obscure and allegedly unjust charge just three years before, under Gratian himself. Strangest of all, Theodosius was the only emperor in Roman or Byzantine history to be proclaimed by another emperor who was not a relative and had a relative already proclaimed – in Gratian's case, his brother Valentinian II (375-392, born 371). Gratian and Theodosius seem barely to have known each other and never to have liked each other. To anyone but the most determined skeptic about pagan divination, Theodosius' accession must have appeared clear proof that the THEOD oracle had foreseen the future.

Most modem historians of Late Antiquity, believing no such thing, have treated the THEOD oracle and Theodosius' accession as unrelated events, and the correspondence between them as historically insignificant. "Pure coincidence (of course)", John Matthews has written[3]. David Potter has simply remarked that the accession of Theodosius made the THEOD oracle seem "all the more remarkable" to his contemporaries[4]. Stephen Williams and Gerard Friell have referred to the correspondence only in a cryptic parenthesis: "(The prophecy of course was ultimately fulfilled, as prophecies in Roman histories usually are)"[5]. More boldly, Franz Josef Wiebe has suggested that our six earliest sources might all be wrong and the oracle might have been invented after Theodosius' accession, though this theory appears to have found no followers[6]. Noel Lenski, while rejecting Wiebe's suggestion, has discussed the oracle without even mentioning that it fit Theodosius' name[7].

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[3] J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus,* London 1989, 224.

[4] D.S. Potter, *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius,* Cambridge (Mass.) 1994, 181-182.

[5] Williams and Friell, *Theodosius* (n. 1 above), 24. P. Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (2005), 29, is similarly coy: "If they'd only carried on [with their divining past the letters THEOD], they could have saved themselves both false hopes and nasty deaths, since Valens' successor was called Theodosius".

[6] F. J. Wiebe, *Kaiser Valens und die heidnische Opposition* Bonn 1995, 100-106.

[7] N. E. Lenski, *Failure of Empire. Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century A.D.,* Berkeley 2002, 223-34, especially 224 n. 74 on Wiebe. M. T. Fogen, *Die Enteignung der Wahrsager. Studien zum kaiserlichen Wissensmonopol in der*

That the oracle was right merely by coincidence seems extremely unlikely. No previous Roman emperor's name had begun with these letters. The *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* lists just thirty-odd men with names beginning with THEOD who are likely to have been alive in 372. Of these, an imperial notary named Theodore was the sole plausible candidate for the Eastern throne, and a group of conspirators duly plotted to make him emperor[8]. The only other man with such a name and any real prominence at the time was the general Theodosius the Elder, Theodosius I's father; but he served in the West under the Western emperor Valentinian I (364-375). Our sources concur that all those who originally heard the oracle were so certain Theodore was their man that they saw no reason to hear any more letters. What then can skeptics about oracles conclude, except that wildly improbable coincidences sometimes occur?

The only other explanation appears to be that the oracle of 372 became so widely known and believed that, after occasioning the otherwise mysterious execution of Theodosius the Elder in 376, it caused Gratian's otherwise inexplicable selection of Theodosius I as emperor in 378-379. Even if Valens and Gratian had not believed in the oracle themselves – and they almost certainly did – they had to fear that others who believed in it might support some candidate for the Eastern throne whose name began with THEOD. Therefore Valens wanted to eliminate suitable claimants with such names, and after Valens' death Gratian chose an emperor with such a name as Valens' successor.

This explanation has apparently never been suggested before, perhaps because it requires a rather different approach from any adopted so far. According to the usual disciplinary boundaries, the THEOD oracle belongs to social or cultural history and Theodosius' selection to political or military history. At least in the field of Late Antiquity, most cultural historians consider political events of little interest for culture, and most political historians consider cultural practices relatively unimportant for politics. Though the oracle and Theodore's conspiracy obviously had political consequences, treason trials and executions among them, the reasons for these have been assumed to be cultural, part of a wider struggle between Christians

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Spätantike, Frankfurt am Main 1993, has discussed prophecy in Late Antiquity without mentioning this oracle at all.

[8] In *PLRE* I (1971), these are a Theod... (in a fragmentary inscription), a Theodolus, Theodoruses 7-19 and 25-27, Theodosiuses 3-5, Theodotuses 1-3, Theons 2-3, Theophiluses 2-5, and Theotecnus 3. The notary is Theodorus 13.

and pagans[9]. Although some contemporaries' belief that Theodosius' accession fulfilled the oracle surely had social and cultural significance, the reasons Theodosius was chosen have been assumed to be purely political, based largely on military considerations[10].

The plausibility of the approach proposed here depends on whether people in Late Antiquity could take a prophecy so seriously that it induced them to make decisions they would not otherwise have made. If no prophecy ever had that much influence, then nobody really believed in prophecies, even if some people found prophecy vaguely intriguing and were not absolutely sure it was nonsense. Such people would then have resembled people today who occasionally read their horoscope but would never let it affect any of their important decisions. In that case, much of the source material for late ancient culture, and much of the modern cultural history derived from that evidence, would be misleading. Yet the contrast between the casual generalities of horoscope columns in modern magazines and the careful calculations of late ancient horoscopes suggests that prophecies were taken far more seriously then than they are today[11]. Although we should not assume that all prophecies were taken equally seriously in all periods, we have good reason to believe that they were taken particularly seriously in Late Antiquity[12].

In Late Antiquity all pagans and Christians naturally believed in the prophecies that they attributed to their own deities, and sometimes believed in other prophecies as well. Christians, who generally thought the pagan gods were demons with real but limited power, disputed whether that power could extend to knowing the future. St. Augustine thought it could, but insisted in his short treatise *On the Demons' Divination* that this ability should not

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[9] See most recently Matthews, *Roman Empire* (n. 3 above), 219-226, Wiebe, *Kaiser Valens* (n. 6 above), 86-286, and F. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization, c. 370-529,* Boston-Leiden 2001², I, 49-51 and 56-59.

[10] See most recently J. Vanderspoel, *Themistius and the Imperial Court,* Ann Arbor 1995, 187-198, R. M. Errington, *The Accession of Theodosius I,* Klio 78, 1996, 438-453, and H. Sivan, *Was Theodosius I a Usurper?,* Klio 78, 1996, 198-211.

[11] Cf. O. Neugebauer and H. van Hoesen, *Greek Horoscopes*, Philadelphia 1959, 62-75 and 131-160.

[12] Cf. now W. V. Harris, *Roman Opinions about the Truthfulness of Dreams*, JRS 93, 2003, 18-34, especially 33 ("Apparently we have to wait until considerably later [than 250 A.D] to hear the idea, which is propounded by both Ammianus Marcellinus and Synesius, that all dreams whatever are meaningful, and that it is merely the weakness of humans that prevents them from always knowing what the meaning may be").

undermine Christian faith; yet his careful arguments incidentally reveal that many Christians were troubled by the prospect of demons' having so much power[13]. The hermit St. Anthony, a well-known expert on demons, reportedly denied that they had any real knowledge of the future, and only admitted that they could make shrewd guesses or fly ahead with news before it arrived by ordinary means[14]. The pagan historian Ammianus Marcellinus maintained that prophecy was an authentic science like medicine, but acknowledged that, like physicians, prophets were sometimes mistaken, and that even accurate prophecies could be deceptive[15]. The THEOD oracle certainly was, since Theodore's conspiracy not only failed but resulted in the execution of Theodore himself and his co-conspirators.

In such cases political history and cultural history should be able to complement and to check each other. If a belief system postulated by modern cultural historians meant so little in practice that it could never affect political behavior, that belief system, even if deduced from ancient texts, was essentially irrelevant to real life. Conversely, if motives postulated by modern political historians cannot be explained in the context of ancient culture, those motives are anachronistic and implausible, even if they would make sense in a modem context. In fact, earlier explanations of the THEOD oracle, Theodosius the Elder's execution, Theodosius I's selection, and the connections between them are not fully coherent in either late ancient or modem terms, or in terms of either cultural history or political history. Combining considerations from political and cultural history, however, can produce a more satisfactory interpretation of these events, and of their treatment in the sources.

II. The Prediction of 372

During the winter of 372, Valens put a number of his high officials on trial for treason at Antioch. Ammianus, a native of Antioch writing in Latin at Rome around 395, was apparently present at the trials and gives much the longest account of them. He says the defendants admitted resorting to divination to learn the name of Valens' successor, and purports to quote the testimony of Hilarius, one of those present at the séance. Hilarius testified that their diviner had placed on a tripod a metal plate "in the likeness of the cauldron at Delphi" engraved with the letters of the Greek alphabet on its rim,

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[13] Aug., *De Divinatione Daemonum,* especially 1, 3-5, and 7-8.
[14] Athanasius, *Vita Antonii,* 31-35.
[15] Amm. XXI.1.7-14.

over which the diviner swung a linen thread with a ring attached to its end. As he called out the letters that the ring supposedly designated, they supposedly spelled out hexameter verses. These predicted that the next emperor would be an excellent man, that the diviners themselves would be killed, that "death and fire" also threatened "the emperor along with his judges", and that the conspirators' deaths would be avenged during warfare on "the plains of Mimas".

When asked the next emperor's name, the apparatus produced the letters theta, epsilon, omicron, and delta. Everyone present surmised at once that the emperor would be Theodore, an imperial notary and a pagan, and organized a conspiracy in his favor. This plot was what Valens discovered. The ensuing trials ended with the conviction and execution of the diviners, Theodore, their co-conspirators, and many allegedly innocent men[16]. Particular suspicion fell on educated pagans like Ammianus himself, who comments, "all of us were slinking about as if in Cimmerian shadows", or as if under the sword of Damocles[17]. Fear of being prosecuted during these trials seems the most likely motive for Ammianus' decision to leave Antioch and to settle permanently in Rome, beyond Valens' reach in Valentinian I's Western empire, where Ammianus wrote his history[18].

Apart from Ammianus and some sources that record Theodore's conspiracy but not the oracle, the diviner's four letters are specifically mentioned by five sources with independent value, one in Latin and four in Greek. The other Latin source is the anonymous and probably pagan Pseudo-Aurelius Victor of ca. 400. The Greek sources are the pagan historian Zosimus (ca. 501), the orthodox church historians Socrates (439) and Sozomen (ca. 443), and the ultra-Arian church historian Philostorgius (ca. 430), whose work survives only in an epitome. The church historians add that because of this oracle Valens executed several innocent men whose names happened to begin with the oracle's four letters[19]. Zosimus' usual source was

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[16] Amm. XXIX. 1.5-44. All translations in this article are my own.

[17] Amm. XXIX.2.4.

[18] Note that in 372 the prefect of Rome was a literary man from Antioch, Ampelius, who seems to have been a pagan and an acquaintance of Ammianus's, and that Ammianus gives disproportionate treatment to conditions and events at Rome from this time on; cf. Amm. XXVIII.4.3-35. I treat this matter at greater length in W. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians,* Basingstoke-New York 2007, 56-60.

[19] Pseudo-Aurelius Victor 48.3-4; Zos. IV. 13-3; Philostorgius IX. 15; Socr. IV. 19; Soz. VI.35. For the date of Pseudo-Aurelius' *Epitome* (between 395 and 408), see G. Bonamente, *Minor Latin Historians of the Fourth Century A.D.,* in G. Marasco

the pagan Eunapius of Sardis, whose lost history can be dated to about 397 in its first edition; the surviving fragments of Eunapius' history mention Theodore and the inquiry about the next emperor[20]. Though no preserved fragment of Eunapius' history records the details of the divination, Zosimus mentions the four letters and the tripod. Since the wording of Pseudo-Aurelius' account of the oracle resembles that of Zosimus, Pseudo-Aurelius probably followed Eunapius as well.

That any of the three church historians consulted Eunapius' account of the oracle is uncertain, since their descriptions differ somewhat from his and from each other[21]. Philostorgius, who seems the most likely to have used Eunapius in some cases, in this one probably did not, because he mentions no tripod, dish, ring, or thread, but says that the beginning of the name of Valens' successor was spelled out by "pebbles marked with letters"[22]. Socrates, who appears to have read neither Eunapius nor Philostorgius, says nothing about a tripod or pebbles, but reports that the diviners learned the four letters through "necromancy"[23]. Sozomen, who may have read Eunapius and had certainly read Socrates, mentions the tripod without referring to the pebbles or necromancy, but his story is otherwise rather different from that of Zosimus/Eunapius. Unlike the other sources, Sozomen mentions no conspiracy, but only a prediction[24].

We seem therefore to have five at least partly independent sources for the THEOD oracle: Ammianus, Eunapius/Zosimus/Pseudo-Aurelius, Philostorgius, Socrates, and Sozomen. The first two of these substantially agree and appear to be reliable evidence of what transpired at the trial. Some scholars have found confirmation of this sort of divination in a bronze diviner's dish, tripod, and rings discovered at Pergamum, which at least

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(ed. by), *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity: Fourth to Sixth Century A.D.*, Leiden 2003, 100. For the dates of the other historians, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians* (n. 18 above), 108, 128, 138-139, and 148-149.

[20] Eunapius, fr. 39 in R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire*, Liverpool 1981-1983, II, 54-56; cf. Eunapius, *Vitae* 480, mentioning the oracle and referring to a more detailed account in his lost history. For Eunapius' date, see again Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians* (n. 18 above), 82-83.

[21] See Blockley, *Fragmentary Classicising Historians*, I, 97-100.

[22] Philostorgius IX. 15.

[23] Socr. IV. 19.1.

[24] Soz. VI.35.4-6.

provide a general context for this sort of divination[25]. The church historians, who unlike Eunapius, Ammianus, and Pseudo-Aurelius were too young to have gathered any information at the time, seem to have followed less reliable hearsay. Evidently the story circulated widely by a combination of written and oral means, no doubt because contemporaries considered it both interesting and important.

None of the historians, whether Christian or pagan, implies that the prediction was wrong. Pseudo-Aurelius flatly states that Theodosius' accession fulfilled it[26]. To be sure, Eunapius in his *Lives of the Sophists* endorses the view that plotting on the basis of oracles was dangerous folly, even when the oracles were correct[27]. Our very compressed epitome of Philostorgius says that "the demons, as is their custom, made their responses ambiguous, for the ruin of believers and [yet] the avoidance of error", evidently meaning that the demons gave a reply that was accurate but worded so ambiguously that it ruined those who believed in it[28]. Socrates simply observes that Valens should have trusted in God, while Sozomen ridicules the emperor for thinking he could kill his own successor[29].

Ammianus clearly indicates that what the diviner predicted was not the name of the next man to be proclaimed emperor, which as matters turned out would have been the Western emperor Valentinian II, but "the name of the one who would be emperor after Valens", which was what mattered most to Easterners[30]. Eunapius/Zosimus, Pseudo-Aurelius, Socrates, and Sozomen

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[25] See most recently A. Mastrocinque, *The Divinatory Kit from Pergamon and Greek Magic in Late Antiquity,* JRA 15, 2002, 173-187, and R. Gordon, *Another View of the Pergamon Divination Kit,* JRA 15, 2002, 188-198. Gordon argues persuasively against any close connection between the kit and the sort of divination described by Ammianus; Amm. XXIX 29 refers to a tripod made of laurel wood, which would be unlikely to survive to be excavated. Interestingly, a divinatory tripod similar to the one from Pergamum has been found in a sixth-century house at Apamea, which was overwhelmingly Christian by that time; see G. Donnay, *Instrument divinatoire d'époque romaine,* in J. Baity (éd. par), *Apamée de Syrie: Bilan des recherches archéologiques, 1973-1979,* Bruxelles 1984, 203-212.

[26] Pseudo-Aurelius 48.1-3.

[27] See Eunapius, *Vitae* VII.6.3-9, 480, where Eunapius obviously agrees with the views he attributes to the philosopher Maximus.

[28] Philostorgius IX. 15.

[29] Socr. IV. 19; Soz. VI.35.

[30] Amm. XXIX.1.6; cf. Amm. XXIX.1.32, where those present are quoted as having asked, "Who will follow the present reign?". While technically Gratian and

all concur that the oracle referred to Valens' successor, not to the next emperor anywhere in the empire[31]. All the sources also agree that Valens took the oracle very personally, and no source implies that it troubled his older brother, the Western emperor Valentinian I.

By 372, despite the theoretical unity of the empire, both emperors were thinking in terms of separate Eastern and Western successions. Valentinian I had chosen his eight-year-old son Gratian in 367 as the next Western emperor, and Valens had appointed his three-year-old son Valentinian Galates as Eastern consul for 369, obviously meaning to name him the next Eastern emperor when he was older[32]. Little Galates' death, which left the Eastern succession open, must have been what induced the diviners to raise the question of a successor when they did. Galates died shortly after Epiphany (January 6) of 372, perhaps within the month[33]. Because the diviners would hardly have run the deadly risk of inquiring about the succession while Galates was the heir apparent, their divination probably occurred around February and the discovery of their plot around March, since Ammianus still puts it during Valens' winter sojourn at Antioch[34].

For anyone who believed in pagan divination, the oracle's accuracy was no problem. For the rest of us, the obvious explanation is that the diviner manipulated his apparatus to produce the results he wanted, flattering Theodore and erroneously naming him as Valens' successor. The diviner was obviously a pagan, though his oracle gave the plot a life of its own and it may

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Valentinian II ruled the East for a few months after Valens' death, both had become emperors before Valens' reign ended (Gratian in 367, before the oracle).

[31] Though our epitome of Philostorgius fails to specify exactly what the oracle foretold for the man whose name began with THEOD, that was presumably specified in Philostorgius' original text, and is clearly implied by the fact that Theodore tried to become emperor as a result of the oracle.

[32] The orator Themistius urged Valens to designate Galates his successor in 369; cf. Vanderspoel, *Themistius* (n. 10 above), 170-173, and *PLRE* I, Galates (but also n. 33 below).

[33] T. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality*, Ithaca-London 1998, 252 and n. 15, and Lenski, *Failure* (n. 7 above), 253-254, date to January of 372 (rather than 370 or 371) the visit of Valens to Cappadocian Caesarea that occurred soon before Galates' death. Valens however returned to Antioch before Galates died.

[34] Amm. XXIX. 1.4. Admittedly, since this is a military context, "winter" might mean the time spent in winter quarters; but a date later than April seems excluded.

also have attracted some Christian adherents[35]. Why the diviner should have predicted that he and his associates would be killed is much more problematic, since that cannot have been the result they wanted. Moreover, it seems incredible that anyone would join a conspiracy that he knew would fail and result in his death. As a rule, people join conspiracies because they hope to succeed in installing a candidate who will then reward them for their help.

A plausible explanation can however be suggested for this part of the prophecy. When the plot began to unravel, the conspirators had a clear motive to make a desperate attempt to save their lives by adding a conditional prediction that if they were executed the emperor and his judges would also die. This threat could have been made more vivid by referring to warfare on the "plains of Mimas", which were in northern Ionia on the Aegean coast. Ammianus hints that the prediction was conditional by saying in his summary that "the Furies threatened" the emperor and judges with death and fire. If so, once the executions had taken place and satisfied the condition, Ammianus chose to quote only the three Greek verses describing the fate in store for Valens and his judges[36]. Though the judges seem to have escaped their predicted doom, and Valens died far from Ionia, after his death the "plains of Mimas" were inevitably reinterpreted to mean the plains around Adrianople. Ammianus accepts the reinterpretation, and with it the whole oracle[37].

Beyond this, as Attilio Mastrocinque has suggested, "We do not need to believe Ammianus' claim [actually Ammianus' report of Hilarius' claim] that the oracle spelled out perfect hexameters, for, as is evident from the comparison [Ammianus] puts into Hilarius' mouth, the claim is motivated by the desire of giving the prediction of a private séance the authority of a prestigious public oracle such as that of Clarian Apollo"[38]. According to Ammianus, Hilarius testified that he and his confederates had great difficulty in obtaining a response from their apparatus; this difficulty seems confirmed

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[35] Lenski, *Failure* (n. 7 above), 226-230, has deflated some of the more sweeping theorizing about the plotters' nostalgia for Julian's paganism.

[36] Amm. XXIX. 1.33. Perhaps the oracle's supposed reference to "fires", which is in Ammianus' summary rather than in the Greek verses he quotes, was inaccurately remembered after Adrianople, since one of the stories about Valens' death was that he was burned in a farmhouse (see Amm. XXXI. 13.14-16). Alternatively, the story of Valens' being burned, which Ammianus reports as hearsay, may have been invented after the fact to explain the oracle's reference to fires. On divergent accounts of Valens' death, see N. Lenski, *Initium mali Romano imperio: Contemporary Reactions to the Battle of Adrianople*, TAPhA 127, 1997, 152-155.

[37] Amm. XXXI.14.8-9.

[38] Mastrocinque, *Divinatory Kit* (n. 25 above), 180.

by their refraining to ask for more than four letters of the next emperor's name[39]. While the two short syllables of ΘΕΟΔ can easily be fitted into dactylic hexameter (so can ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ, but not ΘΕΟΔΟΣΙΟΣ), if these syllables had formed part of a verse the participants would surely have wanted to know the rest of the sentence. After all, even if they felt certain it meant Theodore, it might have given them useful advice. The most likely conclusion is therefore that they asked their recalcitrant oracle only who would succeed Valens, and received only the four-letter answer that every source records.

The accounts of Ammianus, Eunapius/Zosimus/Pseudo-Aurelius, and the three church historians are all at least partly independent of each other. They refer to a time within living memory, and they include nothing supernatural or even unlikely. Ammianus himself, generally considered the most reliable source for the period, seems to have consulted the actual records of the trial and can quote alleged verses from the oracle in Greek. If he or anyone else had invented the prediction later, indignant Christian apologists could easily have refuted it. Instead Socrates, Sozomen, and Philostorgius confirm it, even if somewhat uncomfortably. Theodoret of Cyrrhus, who rejected pagan oracles and was the only ordained churchman to write an early history of this period, prudently omits the whole story of Theodore's conspiracy. Yet he surely knew about it from his sources, who probably included Socrates, Sozomen, and Philostorgius[40].

III. The Execution of Theodosius the Elder

Philostorgius says that already during Valens' reign some people thought the correct interpretation of the oracle was not Theodore but Theodosius[41]. According to Socrates, among those executed merely because they had such names as Theodore, Theodotus, Theodosius, or Theodulus was Theodosiolus ("Little Theodosius"), a distinguished and well-born Spaniard[42]. Whether the diminutive form was a copyist's error or a nickname referring to short stature, this looks very much like the distinguished and well-born Spanish general Theodosius the Elder, executed early in 376 at Carthage. Some have objected to the identification because the execution happened four

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[39] Amm. XXIX.1.29 and 32.

[40] Cf. Thdt., *h. e.* III.21-22, where he ridicules pagan divination, though naturally he believed in Christian prophecies (cf. Thdt., *h.e.* 111.18-19). On Theodoret, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians* (n. 18 above), 155-164.

[41] Philostorgius IX. 15.

[42] Socr. IV. 19-6.

years after the conspiracy[43]. Yet Philostorgius, Socrates, and Sozomen all say that the victims with names beginning with THEOD were executed not because they had plotted with Theodore, but because Valens believed in the oracle and feared them as potential successors. According to Ammianus, Valens trembled at the very mention of the plains of Mimas[44].

Although Valens had presumably regarded Theodosius the Elder as a threat since 372, the general was then a subject of Valentinian I. With no reason to fear an oracle that referred to the successor of Valens, Valentinian trusted Theodosius enough to give him the delicate task of suppressing the African rebel Firmus, which Theodosius did in 375. In November 375, however, Valentinian unexpectedly died of a stroke or seizure in Pannonia. His fifteen-year-old son Gratian, then in Gaul, was his designated heir as Western emperor; but the high command in Pannonia also proclaimed Valentinian's four-year-old son Valentinian II co-emperor on their own initiative. Thus Valens became senior emperor, and presumably regarded Theodosius as even more dangerous than before. Socrates implies, and the later historian Jordanes states, that it was Valens who condemned Theodosius[45]. Recently Williams and Friell have suggested, with some hesitation, that Theodosius' enemies might have exploited Valens' fears about the oracle to have Theodosius killed[46].

In a recent article on Theodosius I's accession, R. M. Errington has reconsidered the question of Theodosius the Elder's execution[47]. Errington points out that no source says the elder Theodosius was given a trial, and that his posthumous rehabilitation in Italy appears to demonstrate his innocence of plotting against Gratian, who must have approved the rehabilitation[48]. Following Alexander Demandt, Errington relies on an apparently early addition to St. Jerome's *Chronicle* stating that Theodosius was killed on the initiative of "the former prefect Maximinus" and his associates, all of whom

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[43] *E.g.*, A. Demandt, *Der Tod des älteren Theodosius,* Historia 18, 1969, 598-626, especially 612-613.

[44] Amm. XXXI.14.8.

[45] Socr. IV.19.6 (referring to "Theodosiolus"); Jordanes, *Romana* 312.

[46] Williams and Friell, *Theodosius* (n. 1 above), 24.

[47] Errington, *Accession* (n. 10 above), 443-447.

[48] This argument of Errington, *Accession* (n. 10 above), 445 and n. 47, seems much more persuasive than the reassertion of some earlier opinions made by Vanderspoel, *Themistius* (n. 10 above), 188-189: "The *conspiration du silence* of the sources guarantees [Theodosius the Elder's] guilt, on charges that must have included treason".

Gratian executed soon afterwards[49]. Maximinus, Prefect of Gaul from 371 to 376, is known to have been executed along with two of his associates, Simplicius and Doryphorianus, in spring 376, soon after Theodosius the Elder[50]. Errington, without trying to reconstruct the details of what he calls the "political infighting" of the time, proposes that Maximinus and his partisans had Theodosius killed in the confusion following Valentinian's death, and were then outmaneuvered by others. If so, the reason Theodosius I never attempted as emperor to punish the men responsible for killing his father was that they were already dead[51].

Though Errington does not suggest how Maximinus might have contrived in Gaul to have Theodosius the Elder killed in Africa, this was certainly possible. When Valentinian died on November 17, 375 at Brigetio (some 40 miles west of modern Budapest), Gratian was at Trier[52]. As the incumbent Prefect of Gaul, Maximinus was evidently also at Trier. Once news came of Valentinian's death, Maximinus quickly persuaded Gratian to appoint Doryphorianus, who lived in Gaul, to succeed Simplicius as Vicar of the City of Rome. Doryphorianus hurried to Rome to assume his office. Ammianus holds Maximinus, Simplicius, and Doryphorianus responsible for the unjust executions of many aristocrats at Rome, now and earlier, and is happy to mention the subsequent executions of the three by Gratian, which he promises to describe later in his history – but never does[53].

If Maximinus did arrange for Theodosius the Elder's execution, presumably he took his chance after Valentinian's death and communicated his wishes to Doryphorianus, who on his arrival at Rome sent men to Carthage to kill Theodosius. The date of Theodosius' execution was evidently between January and March 376, since it seems unlikely to have occurred under the new Proconsul of Africa Hesperius, who was appointed by Gratian no later than March 10 and cannot have taken long to assume his post[54]. Though

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[49] Errington, *Accession* (n. 10 above), 446-447. For the interpolation, see R. Helm's edition of Jerome's *Chronicon,* xviii.

[50] See *PLRE* I, Maximinus 7, Simplicius 7, and Doryphorianus.

[51] Errington, *Accession* (n. 10 above), 447 and 445.

[52] Amm. XXX. 10.1.

[53] See Amm. XXVIII. 1.45-57. At XXVIII. 1.53, the "Augustus" who appointed Doryphorianus in Gaul must be Gratian after Valentinian's death, because if Valentinian had made the appointment he would have done it in Pannonia, not Gaul; cf. *PLRE* I, Doryphorianus.

[54] Demandt, *Der Tod des älteren Theodosius* (n. 43 above), 600-601; cf. *PLRE* I, Hesperius 2.

January was probably too soon for Maximinus and his confederates to have managed the execution, with a prefect's unlimited use of the public postal service February should have been quite possible[55]. Maximinus' own execution probably took place between mid-April and mid-May of the same year[56].

Errington never suggests why Theodosius was killed, except as an enemy of Maximinus. Any enmity between the two men must however be inferred, because no source mentions it. This high military officer and high civil official had both enjoyed Valentinian I's confidence in their different spheres without, as far as we know, getting in each other's way. No doubt the sort of competing groups of Western officers and officials postulated by Errington and others did exist, as such groups do in every political system. Yet these groups seem to have been loose alliances of relatives, friends, and people with shared interests, not tightly organized factions like Mafia families in America, which would grasp any chance to liquidate a member of a rival faction. Moreover, killing a general as senior as Theodosius the Elder would have been a practically suicidal act without clear authorization from an emperor. It would quite simply have been murder, a capital crime.

The fact that Theodosius, though commanding an army of some strength, failed to defend himself when he was arrested seems significant. He was not just assassinated without warning, because according to Orosius the executioners allowed Theodosius a last wish, to be baptized[57]. His failure to resist supports Errington's conclusion that he was innocent of plotting to use his army to seize power, because if he had been actively plotting he would hardly have let himself be taken into custody by messengers who came without an army[58]. The messengers also seem to have known that he was innocent, because they apparently anticipated that he would neither suspect nor resist them. Even so, Theodosius would hardly have put himself in their power unless they had come with a warrant of some kind from an emperor. Although a forged imperial warrant might possibly have deceived

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[55] For the prefects' command of the postal service, see Jones, *Later Roman Empire* (n. 1 above), 401-402. For the time needed to arrange the execution, see n. 63 below.

[56] Maximinus is last attested as Prefect of Gaul on April 16, 376 (*PLRE* I, Maximinus 7), and his successor Claudius Antonius is first attested on May 23, 376 (*PLRE* I, Antonius 5).

[57] Orosius, *Historia adversus Paganos* VII.33.7.

[58] Although he might possibly have let himself be taken if he had merely contemplated seizing power, in that case he would still have been legally innocent.

Theodosius, it would virtually have guaranteed Maximinus' execution when the matter was investigated later – unless Maximinus was prepared to rebel against Gratian, as he was not.

Yet Maximinus is most unlikely to have acted with the approval of Gratian, who had nothing personally to fear from an oracle referring only to the successor of Valens. (Gratian would still have had nothing to fear on the arbitrary and unlikely assumption that he – unlike his father and all our sources – thought the oracle might refer to the next emperor in either East or West, because then the proclamation of Valentinian II would already have proved the oracle false.) Nor do Gratian and Valens seem ever to have been on good terms with each other[59]. Besides, the short interval between Gratian's accession and Theodosius' execution practically excludes the possibility that Valens won Gratian's approval for the execution; the haste with which it was performed rather betrays anxiety to accomplish it before Gratian could intervene. Valentinian II was far too young to give any orders, and the officers who had proclaimed him, Merobaudes and Probus, were already worried that Gratian might disapprove of their proclamation and would hardly have dared to execute Theodosius without consulting Gratian[60]. If they had done such a thing without authorization, Gratian would at the very least have been angry with them, but he was not[61].

The only other emperor who could have ordered Theodosius the Elder's execution was Valens, then the sole adult reigning in either part of the empire. He would have seemed able both to reward and to protect anyone who followed his orders. Every high official in the West must have known since 372 that Valens took the THEOD oracle very seriously, and that he wanted to eliminate potential successors whose names began with those letters. If on hearing of Valentinian's death Maximinus had sent Valens an urgent message that Theodosius could be killed as soon as an imperial order was dispatched to Rome, Valens was surely ready to dispatch such an order[62]. By using the imperial post, the whole business could easily have been

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[59] See Zos. IV.24.4, and Lenski, *Failure* (n. 7 above), 357-367.

[60] Cf. Amm. XXX. 10.6.

[61] As pointed out by Errington, *Accession* (n. 10 above), 445-456.

[62] The reference to Maximinus in the interpolation in Jerome's *Chronicle* seems however to exclude the possibility that Valens took the initiative and sent an order to Rome or Carthage in the hope that Simplicius or someone else would obey it.

completed within the available time of more than three months[63]. The execution would then have been perfectly legal, and Maximinus and his friends could reasonably have expected Gratian to accept it. Unfortunately for them, Gratian turned (or was turned) against them. He had the authority to execute them and, according to Ammianus, good legal grounds for doing so, entirely apart from Theodosius' execution. Valens was too far away to help them, if by then he cared.

This line of argument seems the only satisfactory explanation not only for why Maximinus dared to act and succeeded in acting, but also for why Ammianus is silent about the execution. His silence is the more puzzling because it was evidently not part of his original plan. He records Gratian's campaigns as late as 378, refers to the executions of Maximinus and his clients in 376 in a discussion of their earlier misdeeds, and promises to describe their deaths "at the proper time"[64]. Yet Ammianus must have changed his mind, because he never returns to them. He cannot have been reluctant to describe or to commend their deaths, because in his earlier reference he does both, if not in the place or at the length he proposed. His problem seems rather to have been with the unignorable event that preceded their deaths – Theodosius' execution, which he never mentions anywhere, even obliquely. Though less knowledgeable writers, especially those who lived in the East like Jerome or Eunapius, may not have known the circumstances behind Theodosius' execution, Ammianus had informants at

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[63] Libanius, *Or.* XXI. 12-16, records that in 387 the high official Caesarius traveled at top speed by the coaches of the public post from Antioch to Constantinople (ca. 1100 km. = 660 mi.) in 5½ days, for an average of ca. 200 km. (120 mi.) a day, which trained postal couriers should have been able to match. At this rate, the news of Valentinian's death would have traveled to Maximinus from Brigetio to Trier (also ca. 1100 km.) in ca. 6 days; Maximinus could have sent Valens a message from Trier to Antioch (ca. 3500 km. = 2100 mi.) in ca. 18 days; and Valens could have sent an order by land from Antioch to Rome (ca. 3400 km. = 2040 mi.) in ca. 17 days, for a total of ca. 41 days of travel by couriers. The voyage from Rome to Carthage could take as little as two days, though the actual time depended on unpredictable winter weather. While additional time would of course have been needed to make decisions and arrangements, 3½ months still seem sufficient. See now A. Kolb, *Transport und Nachrichtentransfer im Römischen Reich,* Berlin 2000, 308-332, especially 313-314, 315, and 318, recording top speeds of 235 km. (141 mi.) a day by coaches changing horses, 294 km. (176 mi.) a day by couriers changing horses, and two days from Ostia to Africa by sea.

[64] Amm. XXVIII.1.57; cf. *PLRE* I, 577-578.

Rome who must have told him something about it, and probably the whole story.

Apart from this omission, Ammianus' treatment of both the younger and the elder Theodosius is detailed and laudatory. Despite denouncing several emperors for their cruelty, Ammianus defends Theodosius the Elder against "malevolent critics" who think he was cruel just because he burned alive or mutilated his soldiers for desertion, flight, or refusing combat[65]. As for Theodosius I, Ammianus probably exaggerates the "frequent engagements" in which the young general, "later a most illustrious prince", defeated the Sarmatians in 374[66]. If Maximinus had killed Theodosius the Elder on his own initiative, Ammianus would presumably have included the murder as the last and worst of Maximinus' many crimes. If Gratian had approved the execution, Ammianus could have included it among the "evil deeds" that he blames on Gratian's courtiers[67].

However, as a believer in divination who wanted to flatter the Theodosian dynasty, what could Ammianus write about Theodosius the Elder's execution if Valens had ordered it because of the THEOD oracle? Not that the oracle was false, after it had been proved correct by Theodosius I's accession. Not that the grounds for the execution were falsified, because the victim's name did begin with the oracle's letters. Not that Valens' order was unjustified, because Ammianus would have thought Valens was right to fear Theodosius the Elder; while saying Valens' reign of terror exceeded all justifiable bounds, Ammianus refuses to blame the emperor for executing those who really posed a danger to his life, including Theodore[68]. The historian could not even blame Maximinus and his cronies for serving the interests and obeying the orders of their senior emperor. Yet least of all could Ammianus write anything that seemed to excuse the execution of Theodosius, who was innocent of any crime, and had descendants still ruling the empire. Even if Ammianus had at first not realized how difficult this problem would be, when he actually came to deal with it he never found a solution he

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[65] Amm. XX3X.5.22-24, 31, 39, and 48-50. Cf. E. A. Thompson, *The Historical Work of Ammianus Marcellinus*, Cambridge 1947, 89-92.

[66] Amm. XXIX.6.15-16. Cf. Zos. IV. 16, who mentions just one victory.

[67] Amm. XXVII.6.15.

[68] Amm. XXIX.l.15-18.

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considered satisfactory. He finally avoided his dilemma by ending his account of Western history with 375[69].

IV. Theodosius the Younger Before His Selection

Theodosius the Younger was Duke of Moesia Prima in 373/374, and Errington is probably right that he remained in his post until 375/376[70]. St. Ambrose says that the men responsible for killing Theodosius the Elder also plotted to kill his son[71]. This was only to be expected, since anyone connected with killing the father would have wanted to eliminate the son as a possible avenger, and Valens regarded anyone named Theodosius as a threat. Yet somehow the younger Theodosius escaped, and managed to reach his family estates in Spain. Perhaps he was warned in time to flee, or perhaps the authorities in Illyricum refused to carry out Valens' orders without Gratian's consent, which was not forthcoming. As Errington observes, Theodosius must have arrived in Spain by 376, because he was living there when he married and fathered his first child, Arcadius, born in 377[72].

Therefore Gratian cannot have taken any immediate steps to recall Theodosius from Spain or to rehabilitate his father's memory. Gratian's failure to do either is hard to explain if Theodosius the Elder had been murdered by insubordinate officials who had promptly been executed in 376, but easy to explain if he had been executed by order of Valens, Gratian's uncle and senior colleague. Though Gratian disliked Valens, to refuse recognition to the legal act of an imperial colleague was a serious matter. According to Theodoret, Gratian summoned Theodosius the Younger out of retirement only after Valens had died at Adrianople.

Then, Theodoret says, Gratian gave Theodosius the rank of Master of Soldiers and, after Theodosius had defeated the "barbarians" in Thrace, proclaimed him Eastern emperor at Sirmium[73]. Though Theodoret seems to imply that the defeated barbarians were the Goths who had won the Battle of Adrianople, the court orators Pacatus and Themistius record that at this time Theodosius defeated not the Goths but the Sarmatians. Confirming that

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[69] Another possibility is that Ammianus originally did record the execution while writing under Eugenius (392-394), a usurper unrelated to the Theodosian dynasty, but then, after Theodosius I overthrew Eugenius, prudently deleted what he had written.

[70] Errington, *Accession* (n. 10 above), 443.

[71] Ambr., *De Obitu Theodosii* 53.

[72] Errington, *Accession* (n. 10 above), 443-444.

[73] Thdt., *h. e.* V.5-6.

Theodosius was summoned only after Adrianople, Pacatus has the personified state ask Theodosius to leave Spain to repair the ravages of "the Goth" which had brought the "death of Illyricum". At that time Pacatus speaks of just two emperors, an "elder" (Gratian) and a "child" (Valentinian II), showing that Valens was dead. Neither Pacatus nor Themistius had any conceivable reason to omit from their panegyrics any earlier victories by Theodosius[74]. Zosimus says that after Adrianople Gratian "chose as his colleague in empire Theodosius, who had set out from Galicia in Spain, the city of Cauca", which here seems to refer to the starting point of Theodosius' journey rather than his birthplace, though Cauca (modern Coca) was evidently both[75].

Although Theodoret's account is quite compatible with the other sources, Errington finds in it "massive practical difficulties" and "oddities, impossibilities and improbabilities (even after rejecting the obviously fictional hagiographic parts) ... ". In Errington's opinion, the 163 days between the Battle of Adrianople on August 9, 378 and Theodosius' proclamation as emperor on January 19, 379 were too short a time for Theodosius to be summoned from Spain, to defeat the Sarmatians, and to be chosen emperor. Errington also objects that Theodosius would have needed to fight later in the year than the usual campaigning season[76]. The same objections were raised, almost simultaneously, by John Vanderspoel[77]. Yet neither scholar presents any evidence to show that the distances could not easily have been covered in the manner described, or that battles were seldom fought in late autumn. Moreover, neither takes into account the military crisis of almost unprecedented urgency created by the catastrophe at Adrianople.

The sources describe frantic activity that under the circumstances was to be expected. Zosimus/Eunapius emphasizes the haste with which the cavalry commander Victor rode from Adrianople to tell Gratian of "the destruction of the army and of the emperor"[78]. Pacatus emphasizes the incredible swiftness with which Theodosius arrived from Spain and plunged

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[74] For the references, see Errington, *Accession* (n. 10 above), 439 n. 7, who however omits the clear allusions to Adrianople by Pacatus, *Panegyrici Latini* 2(12).11.4-5. Themistius tactfully passes over the whole episode of Theodosius' retirement. On Pacatus' oration, see the translation and commentary in C. E. V. Nixon and B. Saylor Rodgers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini*, Berkeley 1994, 437-519, especially 461-462 with nn. 40-42.

[75] Zos. IV.24.4.

[76] Errington, *Accession* (n. 10 above), 439-440.

[77] Vanderspoel, *Themistins* (n. 10 above), 190.

[78] Zos. IV.24.3.

into battle against the Sarmatians[79]. Theodoret stresses the speed of Gratian's summons to Theodosius and of Theodosius' arrival from Spain, and of Theodosius' riding back after his victory to report to Gratian[80]. Yet Errington dwells on the time Gratian supposedly needed to make sure Valens had died, the length of the trip from Illyricum to Spain, and hypothetical obstacles that might have kept Theodosius from leaving at once[81].

In delivering and obeying an urgent order from an absolute ruler on a matter of vital importance, the couriers and Theodosius would have been grossly negligent if they had wasted time packing their bags or waiting for better weather. The speed of the imperial post could remain constant over any distance, because it used relays of different couriers and horses, and constantly supplied fresh horses for the coaches of its regular passengers. We know from Libanius that in 387 a high official traveling day and night in a postal coach from Antioch to Constantinople managed a rate of about 200 kilometers a day (120 miles a day, 5 miles an hour). This distance was almost half the 2500-odd kilometers (1500 miles) from Sirmium to Theodosius' home at Cauca. Since trained couriers relieving each other in relays could reach speeds of almost 300 kilometers a day (180 miles a day, 7½ miles an hour), Gratian's message could have reached Theodosius in nine days[82].

Theodosius presumably traveled more slowly from Cauca to Sirmium, because he probably stopped to sleep and eat in the posting inns. Yet in 327 Constantine I and his whole retinue, with no emergency to spur them on, traveled about 1600 kilometers (960 miles) from Constantinople to Aquileia in 24 days or less, a rate of at least 67 kilometers (40 miles) a day[83]. Theodosius, responding to an urgent imperial summons, would have been remiss in his duty (and lacking in ambition to seize an extraordinary

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[79] Pacatus, *Panegyrici Latini* 2(12).10.1-2; cf. Errington, *Accession* (n. 10 above), 448.

[80] Thdt., *h. e.* V.5.2 ("immediately") and 5.4 ("speedily").

[81] Errington, *Accession* (n. 10 above), 440 (citing no evidence): "Even at an average journey of 100 km [60 mi.] per day (surely impossible over such a great distance) and assuming the most favourable constellation for the circumstances – that Theodosius was present when the messenger came, was well and ready to leave at a moment's notice, and that no unforeseen problems occurred on the journey in either direction – he can scarcely have been at Sirmium before late October, which is the time when troops usually head for winter quarters".

[82] For this rate of travel, see n. 63 above.

[83] See T. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1982, 77. Constantine left Constantinople no earlier than March 8 and arrived at Aquileia no later than April 1.

opportunity) if he had managed much less than twice that rate. In a coach driven at the same hourly speed as that of Libanius' official, an average of 16 hours of travel a day would have brought Theodosius to Sirmium in about 19 days. He may well have arrived before the end of September, and could easily have been ready to lead troops by late October.

Besides, late Roman armies often fought during the winter in Illyricum and other places with comparable climates. Galerius, for example, fought the Carpi and Sarmatians through the winter of 301-302 and the Sarmatians again in the winter of 306-307, both in campaigns along the Danube. Constantine fought Licinius in Illyricum in January 317. Constans fought the Franks on the Rhine during the winter of 341-342. Julian fought along the Rhine during the winter of 357-358[84]. Even if Errington is broadly right that generals in the Later Roman Empire preferred not to fight in winter, no "massive practical difficulties" stood in the way. In a time of military emergency, there is nothing improbable about Theodosius' fighting a battle in Illyricum in October, November, or December.

Errington also questions why Gratian should have sent Theodosius against the Sarmatians when the Goths posed the real threat after Adrianople[85]. However, Zosimus/Eunapius records that soon after Adrianople Moesia and Pannonia were raided by "the barbarians there", evidently Sarmatians exploiting the empire's military distress[86]. They needed to be subdued, and unlike the Goths they were not so strong that attacking them posed an unacceptable risk. Errington has greatly overstated his case against Theodoret's account, which contains nothing impossible or even unlikely.

Errington also exaggerates when he refers to "the obviously fictional hagiographic parts" of Theodoret's account, meaning that after the victory over the Sarmatians Theodosius dreamed of being crowned emperor by Bishop Meletius of Antioch. Though this dream might have been invented after the fact, it is neither supernatural nor particularly implausible. Anyone can dream anything, and by that time, perhaps a month before his actual accession, Theodosius must have had some inkling that Gratian was thinking of naming him emperor. If the dream was invented, its reference to Meletius

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[84] Barnes, *The New Empire* (n. 83 above), 63-64 and 73, and Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1993, 225 and 227.

[85] Errington, *Accession* (n. 10 above), 440.

[86] Zos. IV.24.4.

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is puzzling, because he was not a suitable person to crown an emperor and never crowned Theodosius[87].

Vanderspoel argues from an entry in the seventh-century *Paschal Chronicle* that he admits is "a confused composite from various sources" that Theodosius might have visited Constantinople on November 24, 378, rather than, as Socrates says much more plausibly, on November 24, 380. In fact, the *Paschal Chronicle* specifies that Theodosius entered Constantinople only after he was proclaimed emperor. Since the same entry assigns the date of 378 to Valentinian I's death, Gratian's proclamation, and Theodosius' proclamation, which certainly happened in 375, 367, and 379 respectively, the visit to Constantinople is doubtless misdated as well[88]. Vanderspoel further suggests that Theodosius might have had partisans in the East before he became emperor, citing vague and conventional praise in Themistius' panegyrics and Theodosius' alleged dream of being crowned emperor by Meletius of Antioch[89]. In fact, neither Theodoret nor Themistius claims Theodosius had any supporters in the East at the time[90]. Even if he had, in an autocracy like the Later Roman Empire a few Easterners who liked Theodosius would have made no difference to Gratian.

These invalid or trivial objections to all the actual evidence, in the absence of any contrary evidence, are the only grounds on which Errington and Vanderspoel have tried to redate Theodosius' recall from Spain and victory over the Sarmatians to 377, if not to 376[91]. Though Theodoret was sometimes capable of distorting history to serve his purposes, in this case his motives resembled those of the modern historians who want to explain Theodosius' accession without reference to the THEOD oracle. If Theodosius really had served successfully with Gratian for one or two years, Theodoret

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[87] The most suspicious feature of the dream is the assertion of Thdt., *h. e.* V.7, that it allowed Theodosius to recognize Meletius by sight at the Council of Constantinople in 381; but this recognition could be an elaboration without the dream's being wholly fictional.

[88] Vanderspoel, *Themistius* (n. 10 above), 192-193. Cf. M. Whitby and M. Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale, 284-628 AD,* Liverpool 1989, 49-50 and nn. 152, 154, 155, and 156.

[89] Vanderspoel, *Themistius* (n. 10 above), 191-195.

[90] Errington, *Accession* (n. 10 above), 439. Cf. P. Heather and D. Moncur, *Politics, Philosophy, and Empire in the Fourth Century. Select Orations of Themistius,* Liverpool 2001, 221: "In January 329, ... Theodosius was starting essentially from scratch in the East".

[91] Errington, *Accession* (n. 10 above), 448-449; Vanderspoel, *Themistius* (n. 10 above), 190-191.

had no reason whatever to minimize that success or to date it later than it really occurred. If anything, we should suspect Theodoret of exaggerating Theodosius' victory over the Sarmatians. Yet not even the court orators, with still stronger reasons to exaggerate Theodosius' exploits, claim that he won more than a single victory for Gratian.

V. The Selection of Theodosius I

Surely the principal reason for wanting to transfer Theodosius' recall and victory to an earlier date is not to resolve the non-existent difficulties postulated by Errington and Vanderspoel but to deal with the real problem of Gratian's startling choice of Theodosius as Eastern emperor. Theodosius was at this time, according to all the sources, a young man of little military experience who had been in a retirement scarcely distinguishable from disgrace ever since his father's execution. Not only was Theodosius an unlikely candidate, but Gratian had no need to proclaim any new emperor. As Errington rightly remarks, "Formally two emperors, two courts, were enough; Valentinian II with a suitable appanage could have been sent to Constantinople and his generals instructed to deal with the crisis"[92]. Vanderspoel agrees: "The demands of empire did not force Gratian to appoint an emperor, since his young half brother Valentinian was a member of the college. ... No compelling reason for a third emperor exists. Not even military needs suffice: Gratian required a military leader, not an emperor"[93]. Moreover, sending Valentinian II to the East would have resolved the inherent tensions of having two emperors share the West, which could only become worse as Valentinian grew up.

Gratian also took an extraordinary step in choosing a co-emperor who was not a relative. During the previous 71 years, reigning emperors had chosen ten co-emperors, all of them relatives[94]. During the next 88 years, reigning emperors were to choose five more co-emperors, all of them relatives[95]. Gratian was the only emperor to choose a non-relative as co-

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[92] Errington, *Accession* (n. 10 above), 450.

[93] Vanderspoel, *Themistius* (n. 10 above), 189.

[94] Licinius chose as Caesar his son Licinius (317); Constantine I chose as Caesars his sons Crispus (317), Constantine II (317), Constantius II (324), and Constans (333) and his nephew Dalmatius (335); Constantius II chose as Caesars his cousins Gallus (351) and Julian (355); and Valentinian I chose as Augusti his brother Valens (364) and his son Gratian (367).

[95] Theodosius I chose as Augusti his sons Arcadius (383) and Honorius (393); Arcadius chose as Augustus his son Theodosius II (402); Honorius chose as

emperor from the time Galerius chose Licinius in 308 to the time Leo I chose Anthemius in 467, and at those dates neither Galerius nor Leo had eligible relatives whom they could have chosen instead. Every relevant precedent indicated that Gratian, if he thought the East needed an emperor, should have either sent Valentinian II to the East or taken the East for himself and left the West to his brother.

Errington and Vanderspoel find Gratian's selection somewhat more explicable if Theodosius had been recalled earlier, and over the course of a year or so had shown himself a loyal and gifted general on the Danube. Wishing to explain Gratian's selection also seems to be their only reason for accepting uncritically the conventional praise that Pacatus and Themistius lavish on Theodosius' victory over the Sarmatians, which otherwise looks as if it was a minor engagement. Themistius says it was won with only a small force, and neither Ammianus, Socrates, nor Zosimus/Eunapius considered it worth mentioning, though Ammianus and Socrates both praise Theodosius[96]. Errington admits in a footnote, "Theodosius' military qualification to be emperor ... until this year was not exactly astounding ... "[97]. Vanderspoel appears to think, correctly, that the victory over the Sarmatians was insufficient to explain the selection of Theodosius as emperor, and wants to find partisans in the East to make him a more plausible candidate.

At almost the same time as Errington and Vanderspoel, Hagith Sivan attempted to solve the same problem in a different way, by suggesting that Gratian chose Theodosius in late 378 only as an Eastern Master of Soldiers, without authorizing his subsequent proclamation as Eastern emperor at the beginning of 379 after his first military victory[98]. Yet this idea, which contradicts explicit statements in every relevant source, actually makes Gratian's thinking harder to explain. By naming Theodosius Master of Soldiers, giving him an army, and sending him into the power vacuum of the Eastern empire, Gratian obviously enabled him to proclaim himself Eastern emperor. The THEOD oracle made such an outcome still more probable. By not approving this almost inevitable proclamation in advance, Gratian would needlessly have let it become an act of virtual rebellion, risking a civil war. Even on the assumption that Gratian acted stupidly, overruling objections by wiser advisers, people who act stupidly ordinarily have some motive for their

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Augustus his brother-in-law Constantius III (421); and Theodosius II chose as Augustus his cousin Valentinian III (425).

[96] Them. 14.182c.

[97] Errington, *Accession* (n. 10 above), 452 n. 83.

[98] Sivan, *Was Theodosius I a Usurper?* (n. 10 above).

actions, and Gratian had no reason at all, good or bad, to like Theodosius or to trust him not to seize the Eastern throne. Moreover, if Theodosius actually had been a usurper, Pacatus would hardly have called attention to the fact by praising him for trying to decline Gratian's proclamation. Theodosius' show of reluctance, even if conventional and prearranged, was reportedly public[99].

The task of rescuing the severely weakened Eastern empire after the disaster at Adrianople called for an experienced and loyal commander. By 378 Theodosius the Younger was a questionable candidate on both counts. He had served first under his father and then as Duke of Moesia Prima, a military post of middling importance. He had then suffered two severe and unjust blows: his father's execution and the ruin of his own military career. Although Gratian seems not to have been directly responsible for either grievance, he at first did nothing to rehabilitate young Theodosius or to clear his father's name. Under the circumstances Theodosius could reasonably have nursed a grudge against Gratian, and probably did.

Several other generals had more military experience than Theodosius and no such reason for disloyalty to Gratian. Errington mentions Victor, Saturninus, and Merobaudes, all of whom were much more experienced commanders than Theodosius; Errington's speculation that Merobaudes might have been unwilling to become Eastern emperor because his "interests seem to have been confined to the West" suggests a highly improbable lack of ambition, not to mention irresponsibility in the empire's hour of need[100]. These three men were only the most senior commanders, as Masters of Soldiers far outranking a mere former duke like Theodosius, whom Gratian named Master of Soldiers only after summoning him from Spain. If Gratian was willing to consider men who then held or had held ranks no higher than duke, he could presumably have chosen from at least two dozen candidates, of whom some must have done good service and few if any had a grudge against the government. Though the names of most of them are unknown to us, Theodosius too might be unknown to us if he had only served as duke and not become emperor. Probably Gratian had never even met him before 378.

We have no direct evidence for Gratian's motives, and even if we did have some it would probably be worthless. Any memoirs written by the emperor or his advisers would have given a self-serving, idealized, and official version, like contemporary court panegyrics and indeed most modern political memoirs. All we can do is consider Gratian's circumstances. When Gratian heard the news from Adrianople, he would inevitably have

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[99] *Panegyrici Latini* 2(12).11.1-2.

[100] Errington, *Accession* (n. 10 above), 451.

remembered the oracle of 372, which seemed to have predicted Valens' death with accuracy. The oracle had also said Valens would be succeeded by an emperor whose name began with THEOD. Now Gratian could designate that successor.

Valens and many members of his court had believed the oracle, though Ammianus says the emperor at first disregarded the part about the plains of Mimas because he was so poorly educated[101]. Ammianus, Pseudo-Aurelius, Eunapius, Philostorgius, Socrates, and Sozomen all believed in the oracle; we know of no contemporary who doubted it. Though little is recorded about the teenaged Gratian's private beliefs, he had been tutored by the Christian poet Ausonius, who believed the course of his own life had been revealed in a horoscope cast by his grandfather[102]. Even if, contrary to all probability, Gratian was himself skeptical about oracles, he must have known that most people in either part of the empire were not skeptics, and many of them, including most of the influential men, knew about this oracle. If he chose an Eastern emperor with a name like Valentinian II or Merobaudes, Gratian had to weigh the danger that someone else with a name that fit the oracle might be proclaimed emperor in the East, would aggravate an already desperate situation, and might well prevail in the end.

As soon as Gratian considered the possibility of following the oracle, he would surely have realized, or been reminded by his advisers, that Theodosius was the only remotely qualified general whose name began with THEOD. Though Theodosius might still feel aggrieved by what had happened to his father and himself, Gratian had not originally been responsible for the father's execution, and had already executed the officials who had carried it out. Valens, who apparently bore the ultimate responsibility, was dead. The elder Theodosius could be posthumously rehabilitated, and the younger Theodosius could hardly blame Gratian for ruining his career if Gratian made him Eastern emperor. Once occupied with the task of managing the military crisis in the Eastern empire, Theodosius would have needed to be unusually vindictive and reckless to pursue any grievance he still felt against Gratian.

Even though after Valens' death he summoned Theodosius at once, Gratian evidently had reservations about him. Otherwise Gratian would have

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[101] Amm. XXXI.14.8.

[102] Ausonius, *Parentalia* IV. 17-22. On Ausonius' Christianity, see A. Cameron, *The Latin Revival of the Fourth Century*, in W. Treadgold (ed. by), *Renaissances Before the Renaissance: Cultural Revivals of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Stanford 1984, 55.

named him Eastern emperor immediately, instead of making him Master of Soldiers and sending him against the Sarmatians with a safely small army. According to Theodoret, Gratian and his court doubted Theodosius when he returned to report his victory, and only believed him after having the battlefield investigated[103]. At least they now knew Theodosius had not used his army to rebel, and he seems to have made a good impression on the even younger emperor. Gratian therefore decided to put aside his misgivings and to risk choosing Theodosius as his Eastern colleague. Yet since Gratian's misgivings were more logical than his choice, that choice seems explicable only if he was consciously following the THEOD oracle.

Fortunately for Gratian and the empire, Theodosius acted responsibly and capably, though he seems never to have cared much for his colleague, as he later showed by proclaiming his son Arcadius emperor without Gratian's approval[104]. As a Christian, Gratian would naturally not have mentioned the pagan oracle in announcing his selection of Theodosius. Scarcely anyone, Christian or pagan, had much interest in emphasizing a pagan oracle that had correctly predicted the proclamation of an emperor who was particularly hostile to paganism. One rare exception may have been the pagan court orator Themistius, who declared, "Gratian proclaims the choice made on high; and earth and sea receive the proclamation in fulfillment of fair expectations and fair omens". Unable to declare explicitly that Theodosius owed his throne to Gratian's accepting pagan divination, Themistius chose words that could be taken merely to express the conventional and unobjectionable sentiment that God had destined Theodosius to be emperor[105]. Yet Theodosius' outlawing divination in the second year of his reign, before legislating against any other pagan practice, seems to show his eagerness to repudiate the oracle that had predicted his accession[106].

The explanation of Gratian's choice suggested here would nonetheless have been fairly acceptable to most people at the time, some of whom must have either suspected or known that it was true. Anyone who believed in the oracle would simply have said that Gratian's obeying it was the means by which what was fated had come about. Though Christians like

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[103] Thdt., *h. e.* V.5.5-6 and 6.2.

[104] See Vanderspoel, *Themistius* (n. 10 above), 196-197, and Heather and Moncur, *Politics, Philosophy, and Empire* (n. 90 above), 255-257.

[105] Them. 16.207a. This passage is explained somewhat differently by Vanderspoel, *Themistius* (n. 10 above), 197-198, and Sivan, *Was Theodosius I a Usurper?* (n. 10 above), 204.

[106] Cf. Jones, *Later Roman Empire* (n. 1 above), 167 and n. 75.

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Theodoret who rejected the veracity of the oracle would not have believed its fulfillment was inevitable, not even they would have condemned Gratian, since they would have thought the selection of a strong champion of Christianity like Theodosius, even for unworthy reasons, fulfilled the will of God.

The extreme reluctance of recent scholars to consider any possible connection between the oracle and Theodosius' accession suggests that modern scholarship may find such an explanation harder to accept. The idea that emperors could make crucial decisions because of oracles may indeed appear strange in the context of what most modern historians have written about either emperors or oracles. Yet such an idea should not appear strange in the context of late ancient sources and late ancient culture. If we want to understand how people thought and acted in other times and cultures, without reinterpreting their thoughts and actions to make them resemble those of our contemporaries, we should consider even possibilities that seem strange to us. Since political history and cultural history are histories of the same people, we should also be ready to see both sorts of history as a coherent whole, in which cultural considerations could shape political decisions.

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THE PROPHECIES OF THE PATRIARCH METHODIUS

In 1960 Jean Gouillard published a study on the then still unpublished *Life of St Euthymius of Sardis*, of which his posthumous first edition appeared in 1987. This *Life* is a ninth-century text of unusual interest. Although its unique manuscript names no author, Gouillard used parallels of style and content to attribute it to the Patriarch Methodius before his patriarchate. Gouillard's stylistic parallels with St. Methodius' known works are convincing, and the similarity of circumstances between Methodius and the author of the *Life* seem to make the identification certain[1]. Some scholars have nonetheless raised objections, based largely on some remarkable consequences that would follow from accepting Methodius' authorship.

The author of the *Life of Euthymius* describes himself as an iconophile priest who was living outside the empire when Leo V died in 820. The author then came to the empire and was arrested by Michael II (820-29). Michael incarcerated him with another prisoner, a layman, in a tomblike cell in a monastery on the island of St. Andrew, southeast of Chalcedon[2]. In this same cell Euthymius of Sardis was also briefly imprisoned by the emperor Theophilus (829-42), until Euthymius died after a severe beating by imperial agents in 831. Within forty days of the martyr's death, the author, still held in the same cell, composed the *Life of Euthymius*.

The anonymous and undated *Life of St Methodius* attests that at the time of Leo V's death Methodius was an iconophile priest living in Rome, and so outside the empire like the author of the *Life of Euthymius*. Also like that author, Methodius returned to the empire and was imprisoned by Michael II in a tomblike cell on the island of St. Andrew with another prisoner, a layman. Methodius remained in this cell until he was moved to the imperial palace in the middle of Theophilus' reign (after, of course, the *Life of Euthymius* had been written). The identification of the author of the *Life of Euthymius* with Methodius seems further confirmed by the fact that

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[1] See J. Gouillard, Une oeuvre inédite du patriarche Méthode: La Vie d'Euthyme de Sardes, *BZ* 53, 1960, p. 36-46, and *idem*, La vie d'Euthyme de Sardes († 821): une oeuvre du patriarche Méthode, *TM* 10, 1987, p. 1-101, esp. p. 11-16. Cf. A. Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650-850)*, Athens 1999, p. 375-77.

[2] For the island and monastery, see R. Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins*, Paris 1975, p. 53-55 (with map).

Methodius is the only leading iconophile known to have been imprisoned between Michael II's amnesty of iconophiles in 821 and Euthymius' arrest in 831.

Two objections to this identification have however recently been raised by Beate Zielke in a collaborative work on the Byzantine patriarchs of the iconoclastic period[3]. First, Zielke observes that according to the *Life of Methodius* Methodius was released from his cell in 829 in an amnesty proclaimed by Michael II on his deathbed, while the author of the *Life of Euthymius* implies that his own imprisonment on St. Andrew continued without interruption up to early 832, when he wrote[4]. Yet the short and vague *Life of Methodius*, which appears to have been written long after Methodius' death, is a later and less reliable source than the detailed and contemporary *Life of Euthymius*, whose author (whoever he was) was certainly not released in any general amnesty in 829[5].

Moreover, the author of the *Life of Euthymius* (like Methodius) may simply have been ordered by Michael II to remain in the Monastery of St. Andrew, rather than being imprisoned there under a sentence for a crime. As a monk, the author (or Methodius) could be relegated to a monastery without formally being a prisoner, and his cell may not have been quite the hellhole that the sources depict. Although the *Life of Euthymius* describes it as small, stuffy, dark, dirty, vermin-infested, cold in winter, and hot in summer, such conditions were not uncommon in Byzantine monastic cells (or other residences). This cell was well enough lighted and furnished that the author could write Euthymius' elegant and detailed biography in it[6]. Under such circumstances, an amnesty for regular prisoners would not have released the author (or Methodius), though he might have been allowed more freedom within the monastery.

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[3] B. Zielke, Methodios I., in R.-J. Lilie, ed., *Die Patriarchen der ikonoklastischen Zeit: Germanos I.-Methodios I. (715-847)*, Frankfurt 1999, p. 187 n. 14 and p. 188 (cf. my review in *Catholic Historical Review* 86, 2000, p. 491-92).

[4] *Life of Methodius*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *PG* 100, 1249B, followed by Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival*, Stanford 1988, p. 258 and n. 362 and p. 259 and n. 363 (which was sent to press before the text of the *Life of Euthymius* appeared in 1987).

[5] The *Life of Methodius* "appears to be late" according to I. Ševčenko, Hagiography of the Iconoclast Period, in A. Bryer and J. Herrin, eds., *Iconoclasm*, Birmingham 1977, p. 116 and n. 22. According to Kazhdan, *History of Byzantine Literature*, p. 368, "probably, it was written long after 847".

[6] *Life of Euthymius*, chap. 16, 43-45 (with chap. 13, 41 on his writing the Life there).

Zielke's second objection is an alleged discrepancy between the age of Methodius and that of the author of the *Life of Euthymius*. The author of the *Life* writes that his young mother had not yet given birth to him at the beginning of the Second Council of Nicaea (24 September-13 October 787), which Euthymius attended[7]. Because the author wished to emphasize how much younger he was than the venerable Euthymius, this statement only means that the author was born after 24 September 787. In fact, since it does not even say that his birth occurred after the council, he could have been born before 13 October 787.

Although Methodius' birthdate is not otherwise known, in a letter addressed to him in Rome, probably in 818, Theodore of Studius calls him an abbot[8]. Byzantine abbots were supposed to be priests, and priests were supposed to be at least thirty years old, as Methodius would have been in 818 if he had been born in late 787 or early 788. Zielke nonetheless argues that because Methodius had already become a monk before he left Byzantium in 815, and monks were not supposed to move from one monastery to another, he must have become an abbot by 815 in Byzantium, not in 818 in Rome. Moreover, according to her, the example of Theodore of Studius implies that normally anyone made an abbot should already have been a priest for at least five years, so that Methodius should have been at least thirty-five in 815 and therefore born before 780[9].

These objections, however, disregard Byzantine monastic practice and the Byzantines' general readiness to make exceptions to canon law[10]. At least three contemporary Byzantines became abbots not only before the age of thirty-five, but after changing monasteries more than once. St. John of Cathara was no older than thirty-three when he became an abbot in 804, after being ordained priest some time before and changing monasteries twice[11]. St.

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[7] *Life of Euthymius*, chap. 3, 23; on the council, see Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, p. 82-89.

[8] Theodore of Studius, *Letters*, no 274, ed. G. Fatouros, Berlin 1992, II, p. 405-6.

[9] Zielke, Methodios, p. 188.

[10] Recently on the application of Byzantine canon law, see I. M. Konidaris, The Ubiquity of Canon Law, in A. Laiou and D. Simon, eds., *Law and Society in Byzantium: Ninth-Twelfth Centuries*, Washington 1994, p. 131-50.

[11] See *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. H. Delehaye (Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum Novembris, Brussels 1902), p. 631-34. John was born no earlier than 771, because at age 9 he entered a monastery outside Constantinople as an iconophile (thus not before 780). In 787 he moved to the Monastery of Dalmatus in Constantinople, where he was ordained priest. He became

Hilarion of Dalmatus was thirty-one when he became an abbot in 807, after being ordained priest some time before and changing monasteries three times[12]. St. Peter of Atroa was thirty-two when he became an abbot in 805, after changing monasteries twice and being ordained priest apparently in his twenties[13]. In the late sixth century, St. Theodore of Syceon was ordained priest, no doubt exceptionally, at age eighteen[14]. While the possibility cannot be excluded that Methodius became an abbot before he was thirty, this would have been unusual. The most likely conclusion is that he was born in late 787 or early 788 and became a priest and abbot at Rome in late 817 or early 818.

The main reason for Zielke's skepticism is probably that admitting Methodius' authorship of the *Life of Euthymius* leads to consequences she firmly resists: that Methodius composed prophecies, had a reputation as a prophet, and because of that reputation was brought from his cell on St. Andrew by the superstitious emperor Theophilus and installed in the imperial palace. The *Life of Euthymius* connects Euthymius' arrest and martyrdom with the appearance of three pamphlets prophesying the deaths of Leo V, Michael II, and Theophilus. The *Life*'s author says that the first pamphlet appeared under his own name, since at the time he lived outside the empire and was safe from punishment. This pamphlet predicted the death of Leo eight months before it happened (on Christmas 820), and was itself dated (thus to April or May 820). The second pamphlet, which predicted the death of Michael II five months before it occurred (on October 2, 829), was anonymous. Since the author professes ignorance of whether it was dated or

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abbot of Cathara in Bithynia in 804, because he had been abbot for a little over ten years when he was deposed at the beginning of Iconoclasm early in 815.

[12] See *Synaxarium*, p. 731-34. Hilarion was born in 776, because he died at the age of 70 three years after recovering his monastery at the restoration of the icons in 843. At the age of 20, therefore in 796, he entered the Monastery of Xerocopium in Constantinople, but soon moved for ten years (ca. 796-806) to the Monastery of Dalmatus, also in Constantinople, where he was ordained priest. Next he moved to the Monastery of Cathara, then became abbot of Dalmatus in 807, since he had been abbot for eight years when he was deposed in 815.

[13] See V. Laurent, ed., *La vie merveilleuse de Saint Pierre d'Atroa († 837)*, Brussels 1956, esp. p. 26-27 and 29-31, for Peter's birth in 773 and wanderings— in 791/92 to a hermitage on Bithynian Mt. Olympus, in 794 to another hermitage in Phrygia, where he was ordained priest, and then, after an abortive pilgrimage to Jerusalem, to the new Monastery of Atroa on Mt. Olympus, where after six months he became abbot at age 32 in 805.

[14] See A.-J. Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéôn* I, Brussels 1970, chap. 21, 18-19.

not he implies that he had not written it, even though he knew when it was written, which must have been April or May 829. But Michael II assumed that this pamphlet too was the work of the author, then already confined on St. Andrew, and had him interrogated and beaten, evidently without eliciting a confession. The third pamphlet, which predicted the death of Theophilus, led to the arrest of Euthymius, apparently on suspicion that he had helped distribute it, because Euthymius was repeatedly interrogated about his associates[15].

Without giving reasons, Zielke finds it almost inconceivable that anyone would let such a prophecy appear under his own name. Yet the *Life of Euthymius* explicitly states that this was the case, whether or not Methodius was the author. She also rejects three independent sources (the *Life of Methodius*, the Pseudo-Symeon, and Genesius, the last agreeing with Theophanes Continuatus) which say that Theophilus transferred Methodius to the palace in order to benefit from his knowledge while keeping him under strict surveillance[16]. She argues that these sources show their ignorance of Theophilus' real reasons by ascribing to him two possible motives: wanting Methodius' advice and wanting to detain him securely. Yet these motives are stated as facts, not as possibilities, and they are fully compatible with each other[17].

In reality, Methodius was exactly the name that one would expect to find attached to a Byzantine prophecy at this time. Since the seventh century, the Byzantines had been fascinated by an apocalyptic prophecy of Byzantine victories over the Arabs purporting to be the work of St. Methodius of Olympus, a fourth-century martyr. This Pseudo-Methodian prophecy, originally composed in Syriac in the mid-seventh century, was soon translated into Greek and became the basis of most middle Byzantine prophetic literature[18]. Moreover, the earliest piece of this literature that survives today, the so-called *Slavonic Daniel*, is almost certainly a Slavonic translation of the

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[15] *Life of Euthymius*, chap. 13, 39-41.

[16] *Life of Methodius*, ed. Migne, *PG* 100, 1252B-C; Pseudo-Symeon, in Theophanes Continuatus, ed. I. Bekker, Bonn 1838, p. 644-45 (discussed below); Genesius, ed. A. Lesmüller-Werner and J. Thurn, Berlin 1978, p. 53; Theophanes Continuatus (in the edition just cited for Pseudo-Symeon), p. 116. (Genesius and Theophanes Continuatus are not independent of each other.)

[17] Zielke, Methodios, p. 212-13 and 214-15.

[18] P. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, Berkeley 1985, esp. p. 13-60. Cf. Kazhdan, *History of Byzantine Literature*, p. 21-22.

very pamphlet mentioned in the *Life of Euthymius* as predicting the death of Michael II.

The *Slavonic Daniel* claims to describe a revelation of the angel Gabriel to the prophet Daniel, although the text refers to Daniel in the third person. It adapts a shortened form of the prophecies of the Pseudo-Methodius to the emperors from Leo III (717-41) to Michael II, with special reference to the Arab invasion of Sicily that began under Michael in 827. Paul Alexander has demonstrated, by explaining several problematic passages as mistranslations, that the *Slavonic Daniel* was translated into Slavonic from a Greek text. For example, the text says of Michael II, "they will lead him to the Hunter", which Alexander interprets as a mistranslation of the Greek for "they will take him to the Kynegion" – the disused arena for hunting games where criminals were executed in Constantinople. In other words, the Greek original predicted that Michael II would be executed. Alexander dated the original text between 827 and 829, because its author knew of the Arab invasion of Sicily but was unaware that Michael would die of natural causes on October 2, 829. Alexander concluded from the author's interest in and knowledge of Sicily that the text was written on the island[19].

Alexander however failed to notice that the author of the *Slavonic Daniel* was aware of the expedition sent from Constantinople to relieve the Arab siege of Henna in spring 829, but unaware of the death of the rebel Euphemius on Sicily in the meantime. Consequently, the *Slavonic Daniel* must have been written precisely in the spring of 829, by someone living not in Sicily but in the East, probably in Constantinople[20]. Yet the author could nonetheless have been of Sicilian origin. His knowledge and interest are concentrated not merely on Sicily but particularly on Syracuse, the home town of the ninth-century Methodius. *The Life of Euthymius* dates its pamphlet prophesying the death of Michael II to April or May of 829. This would have been precisely the date – just after the expedition left for Sicily – of the Greek original of the *Slavonic Daniel*.

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[19] Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, p. 62-72 (a description and annotated translation of the "Slavonic Daniel").

[20] For the references to the relief expedition for Henna and to the "rebel" (Euphemius) as still alive, see Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, p. 68-69 (where "Mariana" is presumably the nearby town of Menaenum, which had become an Arab base). For the events, cf. Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, p. 254-55. Methodius seems to have guessed correctly that Henna, which was almost impregnable, would not fall, but he was unaware of the defeat of the Byzantine expedition before Henna later that spring.

We can doubt that the pamphlet mentioned in the *Life of Euthymius* is the same as the *Slavonic Daniel* only if we are ready to believe that two separate prophetic pamphlets were composed in spring 829, both predicting the death of the emperor Michael II. We could hardly suppose such a coincidence without very strong reasons for not identifying the two texts, and there are none. Once this identification is accepted, the obvious interest in Syracuse on the part of the writer of the *Slavonic Daniel* becomes still another reason for attributing the *Life of Euthymius* to the Syracusan Methodius.

The statement in the *Life of Euthymius* that its author was ignorant of whether this prophecy was dated or not (the *Slavonic Daniel* is undated in its present form) seems a transparent subterfuge, since the author does know that the text appeared five months before Michael's death. Yet Methodius, writing after he had already suffered a beating rather than admit his authorship of the pamphlet, had good reason not to admit his authorship in the *Life of Euthymius*, which he knew might be discovered in his cell. Of course, if Methodius could write the *Life of Euthymius* in his cell, he should also have been able to write a prophetic pamphlet there.

That the future patriarch Methodius had the same rare name as St. Methodius of Olympus, whom Byzantines believed to be the author of the Pseudo-Methodian prophecies, can scarcely be a coincidence. The ninth-century Methodius, as a monk, would have chosen his monastic name in honor of a saint he particularly revered; that saint was obviously St. Methodius of Olympus, the supposed author of the Pseudo-Methodian texts. The ninth-century Methodius set about emulating his name-saint by composing prophecies, like his first pamphlet predicting the death of Leo V[21]. If, as seems almost certain, the second pamphlet was the original of the *Slavonic Daniel*, the *Life of Euthymius* understandably suppresses not only that Methodius was the pamphlet's author but that the pamphlet prophesied Michael would be executed, not die of disease as he actually did. Since the *Life of Euthymius* never as much as hints that Methodius did not write the

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[21] The possibility that the first pamphlet was attributed to Methodius of Olympus rather than to the ninth-century Methodius should however be rejected, because the author of the *Life of Euthymius* says that he had no reason to suppress his name because he was outside the empire. A pamphlet attributed to Methodius of Olympus in the ninth century would either have been considered anonymous or, if considered genuine, would have rendered its author immune from punishment not because he lived outside the empire but because he had been dead for more than six centuries. Nor could a pamphlet attributed to Methodius of Olympus have been dated to April or May of 820.

third, similar pamphlet predicting the death of Theophilus, his authorship of it seems clear.

The three pamphlets that Methodius wrote while living in Rome or detained on St. Andrew quickly came into circulation in Constantinople, because they were soon discovered by the three emperors whose doom they predicted. The texts must therefore have been distributed by other iconophiles, including at least one who had access to Methodius on St. Andrew and presumably gave him news of the Sicilian war. Apparently Euthymius was suspected of being one of the iconophiles who had helped in distributing the third pamphlet. When interrogated about his associates by the Postal Logothete, the imperial minister responsible for internal security who at this time was probably a certain Arsaber the Patrician, Euthymius named just one visitor, the mother-in-law of both the Logothete and the emperor Theophilus. Theophilus' and Arsaber's mother-in-law was Theoctista, who was an iconophile; so were her daughter Theodora and Theophilus' stepmother Euphrosyne[22]. Presumably these three iconophile members of the imperial family had other iconophile associates.

Among those iconophile associates was probably the imperial chamberlain John who, according to the Pseudo-Symeon, was responsible for Theophilus' transferring Methodius to the palace in 838 or 839. Pseudo-Symeon's account, which Zielke dismisses without argument as legendary, is that "by the providence of God" Theophilus found in the palace library an obscure document that disturbed him so much that he became unable to eat. He consulted the patriarch of Constantinople John the Grammarian (838-842) and the imperial professor Leo the Mathematician, neither of whom could explain the text. But the imperial chamberlain John assured the emperor that Methodius could interpret it, and offered to visit him secretly on St. Andrew. Theophilus agreed. As John approached the monastery, he heard Methodius call him by name and profess knowledge of his mission. Asking for paper and ink, the saint wrote an explanation of the text "with three solutions (ἐπὶ τρισὶν λύσεσι)" which John brought back to the emperor. Having read and admired Methodius' response, the emperor had him brought to the palace and kept in a building called the Sigma in order to consult him on difficult points[23]. After

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[22] See *Life of Euthymius*, chaps. 14 and 18-19, 41-43 and 45-49; cf. Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, p. 431 n. 371 (on Arsaber) and 268-71 (on Euphrosyne, Theodora, and Theoctista).

[23] Pseudo-Symeon, p. 644-45, and Zielke, Methodios, p. 210 n. 116, who is unaware that the chronology of the Pseudo-Symeon is worthless; cf. Treadgold, The Chronological Accuracy of the *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete for the Years

Theophilus died in 842, the empress Theodora released Methodius and chose him to become patriarch of Constantinople at the time of the restoration of the icons in 843.

Pseudo-Symeon must have excerpted his source rather clumsily, because he never explains why the text vexed Theophilus or why it required three solutions. Yet that Theophilus was superstitious and relied on the divination of John the Grammarian and the astrology of Leo the Mathematician are independently attested facts[24]. Genesius and Theophanes Continuatus record that Theophilus brought Methodius to the palace specifically in order to profit from his advice on occult matters[25]. Although John the Chamberlain obviously meant to demonstrate Methodius' prophetic powers by telling how Methodius already knew the reason for his coming to St. Andrew, probably Methodius did already know about John's mission and the text, because he had arranged the whole business with John in advance.

This story strikingly resembles another account, which is found not only in the Pseudo-Symeon but in the considerably earlier *Life of Ignatius* by Nicetas the Paphlagonian. These two sources describe how, around 872, the deposed and exiled Patriarch Photius tricked the emperor Basil I[26]. Writing in old-fashioned uncial letters on ancient parchment which he bound in the cover of an ancient book, Photius fabricated a genealogy making Basil's father (really an Armenian of peasant stock) into a descendant of Tiridates, the first Christian king of Armenia. Photius' text prophesied a long and prosperous reign for the next member of the family, named Beclas – an acronym of Basil, his wife Eudocia, and their sons Constantine, Leo, Alexander, and Stephen. Photius gave this book to a friend of his, the imperial chaplain Theophanes, whom he later rewarded by making him bishop of Caesarea. Theophanes pretended to find the book in the palace library, brought it to the emperor, and recommended the exiled Photius as the only one who could interpret it. Basil

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813-845, *DOP* 33, 1979, p. 160 and n. 5. For the actual date, see Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, p. 308 and n. 424 (with p. 441 n. 406 on the date of John the Grammarian's accession as patriarch).

[24] See Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, p. 307-8.

[25] Genesius, p. 53; Theophanes Continuatus, p. 116.

[26] R. J. H. Jenkins, A Note on Nicetas David Paphlago and the *Vita Ignatii*, *DOP* 19, 1965, p. 241-47, dates the *Life of Ignatius* to ca. 907, while the Pseudo-Symeon must be later (though probably not much later) than 963, when its account ends. For recent scholarship on Nicetas, see P. Yannopoulos, Autour de Nicétas le Paphlagonien, *Byz.* 69, 1999, p. 599-602. [Now see also Study 12 in this book.]

summoned Photius to the palace, was delighted with Photius' solution to the mystery, and restored him to favor[27].

This account in Nicetas and the Pseudo-Symeon is partly corroborated by the appearance of Basil's fabricated genealogy from Tiridates in the official histories of the Macedonian dynasty[28]. Another confirmation is that Photius had in his youth been a protégé of the Patriarch Methodius[29]. Presumably Photius, having heard confidentially from Methodius the story of his rehabilitation under Theophilus by means of a book in the palace library, made use of the same sort of deception more than thirty years later, when Photius, like Methodius before him, needed to persuade an emperor to recall him from exile. In literary terms, as transmitted to us, the two stories are quite different in purpose, the first being told to glorify Methodius and the second to denigrate Photius. The full similarity appears only when the incidents are recognized as historical and compared with each other. Then the more complete account of what Photius did can clarify what Methodius had done to inspire him.

Evidently Methodius prepared Theophilus' puzzling and vexatious text himself, probably with some such trappings of antiquity as Photius later employed, and had John the Chamberlain place it in the palace library where Theophilus would be likely to find it. The text was presumably prophetic in nature. The reference to its three solutions may well mean that it combined and adapted Methodius' three earlier pamphlets predicting the deaths of Leo V, Michael II, and Theophilus, with further amplification and mystification. The horrified Theophilus would therefore have believed the text to be independent confirmation that the three previous pamphlets had been correct, and that his own death was imminent. Methodius however explained the text in such a way as both to reassure the emperor and to convince him of his need for Methodius' advice in the future[30].

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[27] *Life of Ignatius*, ed. Migne, *PG* 105, 565C-568C; Pseudo-Symeon, p. 689-90.

[28] Genesius, p. 76; Theophanes Continuatus, p. 212-16.

[29] On Photius' association with Methodius, see C. Mango, The Liquidation of Iconoclasm and the Patriarch Photios, and P. Karlin-Hayter, Gregory of Syracuse, Ignatios, and Photios, both in Bryer and Herrin, *Iconoclasm*, p. 139-40 and 141-45, and Treadgold, Photius Before His Patriarchate, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 53, 2002, p. 14.

[30] Methodius' reassurances may possibly have helped to rouse Theophilus from the melancholy that beset him between the fall of Amorium in summer 838 and his campaign against the Arabs in summer 839; cf. Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, p.

Of course, adopting such an explanation of Methodius' prophecies requires no belief in the supernatural, and no discredit to Methodius. Just as the Pseudo-Methodius had made his original prophecy in the sincere belief that God would not allow Muslims to triumph over Christians indefinitely, Methodius of Syracuse made his prophecies in the sincere belief that God would in due course punish the iconoclasts Leo V, Michael II, and Theophilus. Because everyone dies eventually, Methodius knew that a prophecy of any emperor's death would be fulfilled sooner or later. In the meantime, Methodius doubtless believed that whatever his writings could do to hasten the fall of Iconoclasm would be beneficial. While his motives for concocting a prophecy to trick Theophilus into bringing him to the palace may seem less disinterested, Methodius presumably thought that he could do more for the iconophile cause in the palace than on St. Andrew. Photius too must have believed that his exile was unjust and that arranging a harmless deception to escape from it was justified.

Like Photius, Methodius was a clever and learned man who exploited the superstitions of others less clever and learned than he. In his *Life of Euthymius* Methodius ridicules Theophilus for his furious reaction to the third prophetic pamphlet, observing that if its prophecy was true it could not be averted by retaliation, and if it was false it could be ignored[31]. Yet Theophilus had every reason to regard those who circulated such a pamphlet as undermining his authority and possibly even plotting against him. Methodius' prophecies would have distressed iconoclasts and heartened iconophiles. Eventually they also gained Methodius admittance to the palace, where he formed the connection with Theodora that later secured him the patriarchate[32]. Thus Methodius' prophecies had some practical motives, and achieved some practical success.

The main, if unspoken, reason for rejecting this reconstruction of events would be a belief that Byzantium was such a rational and enlightened place that no people of consequence, and certainly no emperors or patriarchs, were superstitious or exploited superstition. Yet this highly rational Byzantium, which would have been unlike almost every other culture in

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305-12 (though at 308 my discussion of Methodius' prophecy fails to consider this possibility).

[31] *Life of Euthymius*, p. 39-41.

[32] Theodora's reasons for choosing Methodius are admittedly somewhat obscure. See most recently D. Afinogenov, The Great Purge of 843: A Re-Examination, in *Leimôn: Studies Presented to Lennart Rydén on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*. Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 6, Stockholm 1996, p. 79-91, esp. p. 90-91.

history, is not what is found in Byzantine sources. In a skeptical Byzantium, texts like the *Life of Euthymius*, the Pseudo-Methodius, the *Slavonic Daniel*, or any other Byzantine prophecies or most other Byzantine saints' lives or chronicles, could never have been written at all, because they would have been considered absurd by both their authors and their readers, who were among the best educated Byzantines. The sources agree that Methodius, Photius, John the Grammarian, and other patriarchs made prophecies, and that Michael II, Theophilus, Basil I, and other emperors believed in prophecies. All this would remain true even if we were ready to assume that by means of several astounding coincidences the author of the *Slavonic Daniel* and the three pamphlets described in the *Life of Euthymius* could be someone other than Methodius.

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STANDARDIZED NUMBERS IN THE BYZANTINE ARMY

Just as 'the Byzantine Empire' is simply a modern term for the eastern part of the Roman Empire after the third century, so the Byzantine army was a direct continuation of the Roman army. Although whatever date we adopt to separate the Roman and the Byzantine periods must be more or less artificial and arbitrary, AD 285 has much in its favor. In that year the Emperor Diocletian (284-305) divided the Roman Empire in two and took the eastern part to rule himself, giving the eastern Roman Empire an independent institutional identity for the first time. Diocletian can also plausibly be called the founder of the Byzantine army, because he substantially increased the size of the eastern Roman forces and extensively reformed their organization and pay. Yet both before and after Diocletian's reforms the army was a large and tightly organized force composed overwhelmingly of natives of the empire. In these respects the Byzantine army remained typically Roman until the late eleventh century, when it was replaced by a much smaller force of mostly foreign mercenaries[1].

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[1] See W. T. Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army, 284 – 1081* (Stanford, 1995), which as its title indicates is not a comprehensive history but a study 'focusing on the main evidence for understanding the army's role in Byzantine history – chiefly the army's size, organization, and pay' (p. vii). The book was written to accompany my *History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford, 1997), which puts some of its findings in context. No general history of the Byzantine army has yet been written, except for the latest period, which is well covered by M. Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army: Arms and Society, 1204 – 1453* (Philadelphia, 1992). P. Southern and K. Dixon, *The Late Roman Army* (London, 1996), is flawed and even in part plagiarized; see the review by T. Barnes in *American Historical Review* CII (1997), pp. 1139 – 40. J. Birkenmeier, *The Development of the Komnenian Army, 1081 – 1180* (Leiden, 2002), is also seriously deficient; see the review by M. Bartusis in *Speculum* LXXIX (2004), pp. 136 – 39. T. Coello, *Unit Sizes in the Late Roman Army* (Oxford, 1996), includes a good summary of the evidence, but as I shall explain below I find its skepticism about standardization excessive. I shall also explain here some of my many reservations about J. Haldon, *Warfare, State, and Society in the Byzantine World, 565 – 1204* (London, 1999), which often rejects sound evidence that fails to fit the author's assumptions. Most of this article was first presented in a lecture to the Oxford Byzantine Society in May 2001 at the kind invitation of Professor Elizabeth Jeffreys.

Until the last of the old Byzantine army disintegrated during the decade between the battle of Manzikert in 1071 and the battle of Dyrrhachium in 1081, it continued the Roman army's tradition of standardization in both organization and pay. Already in the second century BC, the Greek historian Polybius, who had served in Greek armies, was impressed by the standardization of the Roman army. In Book VI of his *Histories*, Polybius observed that each Roman legion was given from the time of its recruitment the same command structure, subdivisions, number of soldiers, and terms of service as every other legion. He described how every night each legion established its camp on an identical gridiron plan, within which the officers and soldiers invariably pitched their tents in the same locations. Polybius remarked that 'the Romans, pursuing convenience in these matters, seem to take the opposite course from the Greeks'. Whereas Greeks adapted their camps to the terrain, the Romans chose a uniform plan 'for the sake of convenience, and of having a camp that is familiar and always one and the same'[2]. Polybius left no doubt that he considered the standardized system superior, and one of the major reasons for Roman military success.

I

In the slowly developing field of Byzantine military history, scholars need to remember the Roman tradition of standardization when they analyse the informative but often problematic Byzantine evidence. This evidence includes official government manuals and other government documents, contemporary historians' accounts of military preparations and wars, and various incidental mentions of military matters in other sources[3]. Many sources cite statistics for soldiers, officers, pay scales or payrolls. Many of these numbers are round, such as 10,000 soldiers, 200 standard-bearers, pay of 10 nomismata per soldier (the nomisma being the principal Byzantine gold coin) or a payroll of 20,000 pounds of gold. Some Byzantine historians think the roundness of these figures shows that they have been either rounded off, estimated from incomplete information or even fabricated in the absence of any information. While Byzantine sources did sometimes round off, estimate or fabricate numbers, any satisfactory discussion of the problem must take

[2] Polybius, *Histories* VI.42.1 and 5. All translations in this article are my own.

[3] The scanty archaeological evidence available so far is unfortunately of very limited use for military history, though papyri, inscriptions and lead seals from vanished government documents are somewhat more important.

into account that Byzantine and other ancient and medieval figures for the size or pay of armies are of three distinct kinds.

The first kind of figure is the guess, usually made by observing an army in the field and assigning it a round number – say, 100,000 men. For armies larger than a few hundred, such figures are often greatly exaggerated, much like modern police or press estimates of large crowds. This sort of round number, even if reported by an eyewitness, is unreliable, though not necessarily worthless. The second kind of number is the census, made by counting individual soldiers either on muster-rolls or at inspection. Such figures, though subject to the same sort of inaccuracies as a census of a modern population, should be generally reliable. They are usually not round unless they have been rounded off, and even if rounded off they should be roughly correct. The third kind of number is the official establishment, set by regulations or custom at a uniform size for each military unit or the whole army. These numbers, which are correct by definition for some official purposes, should have corresponded fairly closely to actual sizes except in unusual circumstances. For example, actual numbers would be lower soon after heavy losses in battle, or if corrupt commanders were keeping dead or absent soldiers on the rolls in order to pocket their pay[4].

Numbers for official establishments can be round without being either rounded or estimated. The classic example is the Roman legion, which made such an impression on Polybius. By Roman imperial times, after some minor modifications since Polybius' time, each legion had one cohort of 800 men, nine cohorts of 480 men each, and 120 cavalrymen, with officers and staff who brought the total to some 5500 men. The Romans followed the rule that legions should be accompanied by an approximately equal number of auxiliary troops, organized into units of either 500 or 1000 men each. Despite

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[4] For a more detailed discussion of these different sorts of figures, see Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, pp. 43-44. Widespread corruption in keeping the army rolls is alleged by R. MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome* (New Haven, 1988), pp. 161 and 173-74; cf. A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 648-49. Such corruption doubtless occurred, especially in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, a time of very low military pay to which all the passages cited by MacMullen and Jones refer. But my own impression is that these abuses were not widespread in most periods, because the government was aware of the danger, and the standardization of the system allowed most officers and officials to determine whether units were up to strength.

various changes made over time and some minor ambiguities in the sources, the overall principle of standardization in the Roman army is indisputable[5].

From such establishments good (if not exact) modern estimates of the size of the whole Roman army can be made whenever the total number of legions is known. For example, in AD 235, when the army had the equivalent of 35 legions, the whole army can be estimated at around 385,000 men (5500 x 35 x 2). This estimate is close to a figure that is not round and seems to be the result of a census, the 389,704 men reported by the sixth-century bureaucrat John the Lydian for the army under Diocletian, apparently in 285. That date, when Diocletian had just taken charge of the whole empire and before he chose colleagues and divided it, would have been a likely time for him to order a census of the troops, and the figure should in any case apply to the early part of Diocletian's reign, since the army seems to have been around 50% larger by the time he retired in 305. If the total does belong to 285, the Roman army appears to have remained at about the same strength during the previous 50 years, or at least to have been brought back to that figure by the end of the period[6]. This was a half-century of grave military crisis, during which military defeats and financial constraints would have prevented the emperors from adding much to the army's size, but military necessity would have forced them to keep the army up to strength.

Most specialists in Roman history learned some time ago to distinguish figures that represent guesses, censuses and establishments. Historians of the medieval west almost never encounter official establishments, because most feudal or pre-feudal armies had nothing of the sort; they simply consisted of whatever men appeared for any given campaign to fulfil their obligations to serve, or their contracts as mercenaries. But some

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[5] On these legions and auxiliaries, see particularly G. Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army*, 2nd ed. (London, 1979), pp. 107-55. Cf. the slightly different interpretation of Coello, *Unit Sizes*, pp. 1-11: 'It seems most probable that these [120] troopers were carried on the books of the cohorts rather than additionally and that therefore the actual establishment of a legion was 5,120. If this view is mistaken and the mounted element was supernumerary, then the legionary establishment would have been 5,240 men'.

[6] See Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, pp. 44-45 (citing John the Lydian, *On Months* 1.27, and suggesting that John took his figure from government archives) and 49-59 (arguing from several sources that by 305 the army had 581,000 men). Cf. Coello, *Unit Sizes*, pp. 12-13 (referring to 33 legions of 5000 and a praetorian guard of 10,000), 14 and n. 22 (observing that John's 'statistic may be a genuine official figure'), and 30 (noting that John's total 'would fit quite well with other estimates for the situation at Diocletian's accession at least').

modern historians of Byzantium have shown a persistent tendency to confuse their sources' figures for official establishments with guesses, given that both sorts of numbers are often high and round.

For example, most contemporary evidence indicates that, after Diocletian's military reforms, legions had official establishments of 1000 men each, and vexillations had establishments of 500 men each[7]. In a recent survey of middle Byzantine history Mark Whittow has rejected these figures, claiming that Egyptian papyri show legions that 'may instead have been 600 or less', with 'other units', including vexillations, 'sometimes less than 200 strong'[8]. Whittow relies entirely on an analysis of the papyri by Richard Duncan-Jones, who actually found that the establishment of 500 men recorded by John the Lydian for vexillations 'is closely supported' by figures showing vexillations of 506 and 554 men, while figures of 439 and 554 men for detachments of a single legion 'produce a total very close to 1,000' (439 + 554 = 993)[9]. What Whittow seems to have done is to confuse figures for parts of legions and vexillations listed by Duncan-Jones in a table with the entire establishments of those legions and vexillations[10]. Using this error to reject other evidence that fails to agree with it, Whittow proceeds to the erroneous conclusion that the Byzantine army was not nearly as large and well organized as the sources indicate it was, and then that 'the preservation of late Roman administrative and fiscal techniques did not enable the Byzantines to tap and deploy the resources of their empire in a way fundamentally more effective than their western European contemporaries'[11].

To take a second example, a detailed Arabic source, apparently derived from an official Byzantine manual datable to 840, reports that each

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[7] Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, pp. 46-49 and 87-91.

[8] M. Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600 – 1025* (London, 1996), p. 183 and n. 34.

[9] R. Duncan-Jones, *Structure and Scale in the Roman Economy* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 110-14 (quotations from p. 111).

[10] Duncan-Jones, *Structure and Scale*, pp. 112-13 (table 41).

[11] Whittow, *Making of Orthodox Byzantium*, p. 193. H. Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe, AD 350 – 425* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 89-90 and n. 3, also seems to me to confuse some figures for establishments with other figures, but with a better understanding than Whittow of the functioning of the army concludes that official establishments numbered c. 600 and c. 1200, but 'many recorded strengths were somewhat lower', c. 400 and c. 800. Here I think Elton has been misled by figures for units with official establishments of 500 and 1000 that either were deployed along with reinforcements from other units, or had been reduced by a detachment deployed elsewhere, or were somewhat over or under strength.

of the four senior tagmata, the Byzantine army divisions stationed in and around Constantinople, had 4000 men[12]. An official Byzantine guest list dating from 899 reserves for the officers of the four senior tagmata the exact number of places at the emperor's Christmas banquets that would then have been needed for the officers of 4000 soldiers[13]. In a study of the tagmata John Haldon has rejected this figure, following the assumption of J. B. Bury in 1911 that contingents of 700 and 456 men from two of the senior tagmata sent on an expedition against Crete in 949 were their full establishments. Yet even Haldon admits that this document mentions additional men from both these tagmata elsewhere, a point Bury had already acknowledged in 1912[14]. In fact, the contingent sent to Crete from both tagmata totaled 1156 men (700 + 456), and figures for their payroll show that these represented 1000 picked soldiers plus their officers[15]. Haldon has made the same error as Whittow: mistaking

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[12] Qudāmah, ed. and French trans. M. J. de Goeje, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum* VI (Leiden, 1889), pp. 256 (text) and 196-97 (translation). For corrections to this text and translation, see Treadgold, 'Notes on the Numbers and Organization of the Ninth-Century Byzantine Army', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* XXI (1980), pp. 270-73.

[13] See Treadgold, 'Notes on the Numbers', pp. 269-77, and 'Remarks on the Work of Al-Jarmī on Byzantium', *Byzantinoslavica* XLIV (1983), pp. 205-12, both citing the treatise of Philotheus, ed. and French trans. N. Oikonomidès, *Les Listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles* (Paris, 1972), pp. 170-75. The number of officers invited in 899 for each of the tagmata was 204. This number, however, would have been slightly different a few years later, after Leo VI modified the command structure; see below, n. 33.

[14] J .F. Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians: An Administrative, Institutional and Social Survey of the Opsikion and Tagmata, c. 580 – 900* (Bonn, 1984), pp. 276-82 and 548 n. 785 (admitting that the figures for the tagmata that went on the Cretan expedition cannot be complete), 549-50 n. 792 (attempting to explain away the correspondence with the guest lists, apparently as a coincidence), and 91-92 (rejecting figures in the sources that fail 'to fit in with what is otherwise known – or better, assumed – about the society in question'). See also J. Haldon, 'Theory and Practice in Tenth-Century Military Administration: Chapters II, 44 and 45 of the *Book of Ceremonies*', *Travaux et Mémoires* XIII (2000), pp. 330-33. Cf. J. B. Bury, *The Imperial Administrative System in the Ninth Century* (London, 1911), p. 54, and Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire* (London, 1912), p. 228 and n. 1.

[15] On these detachments from the tagmata, see W. Treadgold, 'The Army in the Works of Constantine Porphyrogenitus', *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici*, n.s., XXIX (1992), pp. 130-34 (including a reconstructed payroll for the 1156 men that corresponds with the recorded totals of 34,560 nomismata and 112 ceremonial tunics).

detachments for the whole force. Haldon then cites his low figure for the numbers of the tagmata as evidence for a Marxist interpretation that they formed a small 'elite' of 'Praetorians' designed to maintain the government's 'political and ideological authority' rather than, as the sources suggest, a centralized mobile army that began the middle Byzantine military recovery. Haldon declares that 'it would be wrong ... to consider the tagmata as an effective field force by themselves' because 'their numbers seem not to have been large'[16].

One reason for such misinterpretations has been a tendency to think of the Byzantine army before the eleventh century as if it resembled the later Byzantine army or western medieval armies, neither of which had regular establishments. Haldon implicitly assumes that the later Byzantine army was broadly similar to the earlier one when he takes the years 565 and 1204 as the limits of a recent book, thus ignoring the disintegration of all the army's older elements by 1081 and disregarding its continuity with the Roman army before 565[17]. Whittow explicitly assumes a parallel with the west when he rejects Arab and Byzantine figures for the Byzantine army because '[a]n army of this size would ... place Byzantium in a totally different category from the contemporary states of western Europe'[18]. Whittow's argument is circular: he concludes that the Byzantine army was no larger or more effective than western European armies because he dismisses the ample evidence to the contrary for being incompatible with his conclusion.

Another persistent misconception has been that figures given by the sources for Byzantine military establishments must be guesses simply because they are round. Haldon defends one of his interpretations of official Byzantine documents by observing, 'It has the advantage of not assuming that the numbers of soldiers and sailors and of accompanying officers were exactly even or regular,' though he does not explain why such regularity should be

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[16] Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 338-53 (quotations from pp. 338 and 351). While I find Haldon's conception of imperial ideology to be anachronistic and consider the tagmata to have been an effective fighting force, I would of course agree that the emperors relied on them to defend the government. Cf. my interpretation of the tagmata in Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, pp. 28-32.

[17] See Haldon, *Warfare, State, and Society*. J.-C. Cheynet, 'Les Effectifs de l'armée byzantine aux Xe-XIIe s.', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale, X^e^-XIIe Siècles* XXXV (1995), pp. 319-35, also seems to me to understate the disaster that befell the army in the eleventh century and to confuse figures for establishments with other figures, though many of his assessments of individual pieces of evidence are reasonable.

[18] Whittow, *Making of Orthodox Byzantium*, p. 189.

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implausible[19]. Elsewhere Haldon rejects any conclusions that depend on an 'entirely hypothetical standardization of structures which has to be imposed upon the evidence'[20]. Yet both the regularity and the standardization of structures are attested in dozens of primary sources for the Byzantine army. Though Haldon has argued that differences between some of these figures from the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth centuries show contradictions in the evidence, such contradictions appear only if one makes the unlikely assumption that Byzantine military organization never changed[21].

The underlying if unspoken principle behind such assumptions seems to be that, because reality is inevitably diverse and untidy, explanations that are consistent and regular are unlikely to be correct. Such an axiom may look so commonsensical as to need no demonstration. Thus in a recent study of unit sizes in the later Roman army Terence Coello has suggested, 'It may be that an image of inconsistency is best explained as representing a reality of inconsistency'[22]. Coello goes on to raise reasonable doubts about some of Duncan-Jones's interpretations of the papyrological evidence, but without suggesting corresponding revisions. Instead he makes such observations as, 'Duncan-Jones however seems attracted by the neatness of two months' rations amounting almost exactly to five modii per trooper and five artabas per mount', and 'It may well be however that this whole search for a legionary vexillation "norm" is illusory'[23]. In a discussion of the archaeological evidence, though admitting it is drawn from incomplete excavations of poorly dated forts that may have held only parts of units, Coello still asks rhetorically, 'Are we again seeing inconsistent evidence merely reflecting an inconsistent reality'[24]? Though most of Coello's evidence is fully compatible with the widely accepted figures of 1000 men each for later Roman legions and 500 men each for most other units, in his conclusions he declines to

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[19] Haldon, 'Theory and Practice', pp. 254-55 (quotation from p. 255).

[20] Haldon, *Warfare, State, and Society*, pp. 321-22.

[21] Cf. Haldon, 'Theory and Practice', pp. 305-34, with Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, pp. 43-117.

[22] Coello, *Unit Sizes*, p. 31.

[23] Op. cit., pp. 33-42 (quotations from pp. 38 and 41). Coello is particularly persuasive when he suggests on p. 39 that the small difference between the sums of donatives on 22 December 299 and 1 January 300 might represent not a difference in donative rates, as Duncan-Jones supposed, but the discharge of a few veterans at the end of the year. This suggestion, however, could be accommodated by very modest revisions of Duncan-Jones's calculations (which Coello does not suggest).

[24] Op. cit., pp. 50-52 (quotation from p. 52).

venture much beyond noting the 'overwhelming case for the new, Diocletianic legions being 1,000-2,000 – strong rather than any larger'[25].

The question is not whether reality is naturally regular and consistent, but whether the late Roman and Byzantine armies, which were obviously not natural formations, had certain standards imposed upon them deliberately. No one would maintain, for example, that men and horses of different sizes and appetites left to their own devices would each consume exactly the same amounts of grain every two months. Yet neither can anyone reasonably doubt that those who had to procure, transport and distribute the grain would find it convenient to set standard ration allowances per man and per horse. Polybius also understood the value of the standardization of units and camps in the Roman army, though he knew Greek armies did things differently. The evidence that the Byzantines adopted standards of various kinds cannot therefore be dismissed as inherently implausible, especially because we shall see that it is relatively abundant and self-consistent.

II

Between 285, when the Roman legions still had the same establishments as in the earlier empire, and 1081, when the last of the old Byzantine army fell apart, the sources indicate several major organizational changes. Beginning with the reign of Diocletian, according to various literary sources and papyri (including those discussed by Duncan-Jones), the legions were reduced to 1000 men each, while auxiliary units remained at their former strengths of 500 or 1000 men apiece. Each unit of 1000 or 500 men, besides its commander, had centurions commanding 80 men each and decurions commanding eight men each[26]. By the sixth century, the command structure described in the *Strategicon* of the Emperor Maurice (582-602) is different but equally standardized: the centurions are replaced by hecatontarchs ('commanders of a hundred') commanding 100 men each and the decurions by decarchs ('commanders of ten') commanding 10 men each, while a pentarch ('commander of five') commanding five men each has been added[27].

In discussing battlefield formations, Maurice's *Strategicon* advises commanders to deploy their troops in divisions varying from 200 to 300 to

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[25] Op. cit., pp. 59-66 (quotation from p. 60).

[26] See Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, pp. 87-93, citing Maurice, *Strategicon*, ed. G. Dennis and trans. E. Gamillscheg (Vienna, 1981), I.3, I.5, III.1 and XII.7.

[27] Maurice, *Strategicon* I.3.

400 soldiers, so that the enemy cannot simply calculate the size of the army by counting the number of divisional standards and multiplying by the number of soldiers in a division[28]. Note, however, that the manual's advice assumes that the commander would otherwise be inclined to deploy divisions that were all the same size, and that the enemy would naturally assume that this was what had been done. The second assumption would make sense only if standardized organization were a well-known feature of the Byzantine army, familiar even to a foreign enemy with only a rudimentary knowledge of Byzantine military practices. Note also that the varying numbers of soldiers advised for deployments by the *Strategicon* are all divisible by 100 – and, of course, by 10 and 5 as well. Moreover, the reason the manual gives for varying the size of deployments is relevant only to battlefield conditions, not to the official establishments of units.

From the end of the fifth to the end of the sixth century, all the preserved numbers for establishments of the empire's regional armies are divisible by 5000, which was probably the size of a standard division (*meros* in Greek). These numbers, all from narrative historians, give establishments for the regional armies of Illyricum, the East, Armenia and probably Africa, as well as the oarsmen of the fleet and a large company of soldiers added to the Army of the East[29]. Although the establishments of five other sixth-century regional armies are not specifically recorded, any plausible conjectures for them produce a total close to the contemporary historian Agathias' figure of 150,000 men for the whole army in 559. That total, which

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[28] Op. cit., I.4.

[29] See Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, pp. 59-64, referring to Marcellinus Comes, p. 95 (15,000 men in the Army of Illyricum in 499); Procopius, *Wars* VII.29.3 (15,000 men in the Army of Illyricum in 548, agreeing with Marcellinus), I.18.5 (20,000 men in the Army of the East in 531), I.15.11 (15,000 men in the Army of Armenia in 530), III.11.2 (15,000 regular soldiers in 533, probably meant to be the Army of Africa) and III.11.14 (30,000 oarsmen in the fleet in 533); and Theophanes Confessor, A.M. 6074, p. 251 (15,000 federates added to the Army of the East in 577). In an extremely inaccurate review of my *Byzantium and Its Army* in *Speculum* LXXIV (1999), p. 522, W. Kaegi misquotes me as saying that the Byzantine expedition of 533 against the Vandals numbered 15,000 men; I actually say that in addition to '15,000 regular troops', who I believe were meant to be the establishment of the new Byzantine Army of Africa, the expedition included '30,000 oarsmen, 2,000 marines, 1,000 barbarian mercenaries, and Belisarius' personal retinue' (p. 60). Here and elsewhere Kaegi overlooks my (and the sources') distinctions between official establishments and armies in the field.

like its recorded components is divisible by 5000 men, was probably the exact size of the whole army's official establishment[30].

For the ninth century, the state of the army is attested by four Arab geographers dependent on a certain al-Jarmī, whose source was probably an official Byzantine military manual datable to 840. The regional armies of the early Byzantine period had now become the themes (*themata* in Greek) of the middle Byzantine period. First Jarmī described a theme of 10,000 men, which must be the Thracesian Theme, because his numbers for individual themes show that the Thracesian was the only theme with that many soldiers. In it, two turmarchs commanded 5000 men each; under each turmarch five drungaries commanded 1000 men each; under every drungary five counts commanded 200 men each; under every count five centarchs commanded 40 men each; and under every centarch four decarchs commanded 10 men each. Jarmī put the whole establishment of the army at 120,000 men, which tallies with the individual numbers for most of the themes and all of the tagmata that survive from his work[31].

This system of organization is corroborated by official Byzantine rank lists datable to 842/3 and 899. The total of 120,000 men is supported by Theophanes Confessor's total of 80,000 men for the army in 773, because the troops added between then and 840 can be shown to have totaled 40,000

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[30] Agathias V.13.7-8. Cf. Haldon, *Warfare, State, and Society*, pp. 99-100 (supposing 'a total ... of between 150,000 and 160,000'), and Coello, *Unit Sizes*, p. 31 (noting that Agathias' 'figures – especially the latter [150,000 men] – are not intrinsically unbelievable'). Though W. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 39-41, has rejected Agathias' figure as 'exaggerated', instead he makes a series of troop estimates that are based on no evidence, confuse different kinds of soldiers, fail to match Kaegi's own totals and still seem to be compatible with Agathias' total; cf. Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, pp. 4-5.

[31] Ibn Khurdādhbih, ed. and French trans. M. J. de Goeje in *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum* VI (Leiden, 1889), pp. 111 (text) and 84 (translation); Qudāmah, pp. 255-59 (text) and 196-99 (translation); and Ibn al-Faqīh, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, *Jacuts Geographisches Wörterbuch* II (Leipzig, 1867), pp. 863-65, and trans. in E. W. Brooks, 'Arabic Lists of the Byzantine Themes', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* XXI (1901), pp. 72-77. For analysis, with corrections to these texts and translations, see Treadgold, 'Notes on the Numbers', pp. 269-77 and 280-84, and 'Remarks on the Work'. In the review cited in n. 29 above, Kaegi misinterprets the corrections proposed in these articles as 'very careless use of old Arabic translations'.

men[32]. The *Tactica* of the Emperor Leo VI (886-912), another official Byzantine manual, shows that military organization changed somewhat about 902, when centarchs came to command 100 men each instead of 40, and pentarchs commanding five men each reappear[33]. Probably the pentarchs had continued to exist since they were mentioned in Maurice's *Strategicon*, though Jarmī had found them too insignificant to mention.

The same pattern of round numbers appears in military pay scales. From the fourth to the seventh centuries, pay was reckoned in multiples of standard units known as *capitus* (of four nomismata each) and *annonae* (at first of four nomismata each, later of five nomismata each)[34]. In 840 the pay scale comprised 12 grades assigned to specific ranks and expressed in pounds of gold or fractions of pounds of gold (1/2, 1/4, 1/6 and 1/8)[35]. Payroll figures in the documents for the Byzantine expeditions against Crete in 911 and 949 can in several cases be used to show the regularity of both the command structures and the pay scales[36]. For that matter, the Byzantine monetary

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[32] See Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, pp. 64-75 and 98-105. Cf. Haldon, *Warfare, State, and Society*, p. 102: 'There are some grounds for accepting [80,000] as a total' for 773, and 'the figure of 120,000 probably represents the nominal roll of the army' in the 840s. These totals cannot, however, be reconciled with Haldon's continued insistence (*Warfare, State, and Society*, p. 314 n. 65) that 'The tagmata numbered perhaps 2,000-3,000 at this point', instead of the Arab geographers' figures that total 24,000.

[33] Leo VI, *Tactica* 18.149, ed. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 107, col. 988 A, describing a theme of 4000 men with two turmarchs (one for each 2000 men, though in some other themes the commands of turmarchs were different), four drungaries (one for each 1000 men), 20 counts (one for each 200 men), 40 centarchs (one for each 100 men), 400 decarchs (one for each 10 men) and 800 pentarchs (one for each five men). Cf. Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, pp. 105-6. [Leo's *Tactica* has now been re-edited by G. T. Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI: Text, Translation, and Notes* (*Dumbarton Oaks Texts*; Washington, 2010).]

[34] Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, pp. 141-55.

[35] *Op. cit.*, pp. 119-28. The twelve grades are, in pounds of gold: 40, 36, 24, 12, 6, 3, 2, 1, 1/2, 1/4, 1/6, and 1/8.

[36] See Treadgold, 'Army in the Works', pp. 104-21 and 125-41, with the corrections I propose on p. 146. Haldon, 'Theory and Practice', almost entirely ignores these calculations, declaring equivocally, 'not to say that the information [in these documents] is in any way "incorrect" or untrustworthy', it should none the less 'be treated ... with the greatest reserve: particularly clearly in the case of the numbers involved' (p. 340). As for my corrections, which result from my calculations, Haldon mentions them only in his footnotes (e.g., p. 244 nn. 28, 31, 32), after falsely attributing to himself in his Latin apparatus the ones he uses in his Greek text – *scripsi*

system was based on multiples of twelve: 72 (6 x 12) nomismata to the pound of gold, and in the middle period 12 miliaresia to the nomisma and 24 (2 x 12) folles to the miliaresion[37].

The total military payroll for 840 is a particularly striking example of roundness. A combination of Arab and Byzantine sources, all of which are either official documents themselves or appear to summarize official documents, allows a calculation of this payroll, within a very narrow margin for error, at about 20,001 ½ pounds of gold. Corroborating this result, the chronicles of Theophanes Continuatus and Pseudo-Symeon both record that about 867, when the army and its pay would have been almost the same as in 840, the Emperor Michael III (842-67) melted down 20,000 pounds of gold to meet the army's payroll[38]. Although the chroniclers' figure could of course have been rounded off, its correspondence with the calculated payroll indicates that it was very nearly exact.

III

Why would the Byzantine government and high command have liked round numbers so much? The main reason was surely practical: round numbers were easiest not only to remember but to use in the calculations that Byzantine officials and officers had to make with their extremely awkward system of numerical notation in Greek letters, inherited from the ancient Greeks. The number 12 divided neatly into the halves, thirds, quarters and sixths needed for fractions, which under the Greek numerical system always had to have an unwritten numerator of one. Fractions with numerators larger than one could be expressed only as inconvenient combinations of fractions with numerators of one (for example, 3/8 was 1/4 + 1/8)[39].

Byzantium, like Rome before it, ran a well-organized army and a bureaucratized state without the aid of Arabic numerals, double-entry

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('I have written'), 203.20; *supplevi* ('I have added'), 205.43; *emendavi* ('I have emended'), 207.61; *emendavi*, 207.67; *emendavi*, 209.84; *emendavi*, 221.52.

[37] See P. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins* (London, 1982), pp. 14-16, with his observation on p. 15: 'The duodecimal system took precedence over the decimal and multiples or divisors of 3 and 4 are common'.

[38] See Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, pp. 128-35, citing Theophanes Continuatus, p. 173, and Pseudo-Symeon, p. 659.

[39] A convenient description of the Byzantine numerical system by David Pingree appears in A. Kazhdan, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford, 1991), vol. III, p. 1501, under 'Numbers'.

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bookkeeping, a decimalized currency, modern filing methods, printing or mass literacy. Though virtually all Byzantine officials and most Byzantine officers were at least minimally literate, very few of them had the skills needed to make complex numerical calculations quickly and accurately[40]. Such state documents relating to the army as have survived display frequent errors of copying and arithmetic[41]. Arithmetical errors may well be the reason that some pay figures in the papyri analyzed by Duncan-Jones show minor anomalies that are otherwise hard to explain. Duncan-Jones observes, 'Three of the totals fall just short of very large round figures: 2,496,250 (line 1) is 0.15% short of 2.5 million; 1,386,250 (line 4) is 1% short of 1.4 million; and 1,097,500 (line 5) is 0.23% short of 1.1 million'. In particular, when recorded pay for a unit 'whose suggested strength is 1,000 men' comes to only '998 ½ shares', the half-man can hardly be explained by the unit's being slightly under strength[42].

For a military commander and his subordinates, having units of standard sizes was extremely useful for inspecting, disciplining, paying and deploying them, especially in the middle Byzantine period when soldiers needed to be mustered from their military landholdings all over the countryside[43]. Having units organized by eights or tens also allowed groups of soldiers accustomed to serving with each other to be stationed together eight or ten deep in the battle line, as Byzantine military manuals specified they should be[44]. For the bureaucrats who computed, collected, appropriated

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[40] On Byzantine literacy, see Robert Browning, 'Literacy in the Byzantine World', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* IV (1978), pp. 39-54, and 'Further Reflections on Byzantine Literacy', in J. S. Langdon et al., eds., *To Hellēnikon: Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis*, Jr. I (New Rochelle, NY, 1993), pp. 69-84.

[41] Cf. the documents analyzed in Treadgold, 'Army in the Works', esp. on pp. 79-81, 102-4, 119-20, 121, 124-25, 139-40 and 146.

[42] Duncan-Jones, *Structure and Scale*, pp. 110 n. 18 (where Duncan-Jones however suggests that some 'untidy fractions' may result from 'deductions at source' or 'previous overpayments') and 111.

[43] See the remarks on muster-rolls in the anonymous *Campaign Organization*, ch. 29, in G. Dennis, ed. and trans., *Three Byzantine Military Treatises* (Washington, 1985), pp. 320-22; cf. Treadgold, 'Army in the Works', pp. 26-32 and 347-57.

[44] Maurice, *Strategicon* II.6; Leo VI, *Tactica* 4.38-39, ed. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 107, cols. 708A-B; Dennis, *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, pp. 84-86 (*On Strategy*, ch. 27) and 262 (*Campaign Organization*, ch. 2); and E. McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century* (Washington,

or dispatched the money to pay the army and its various components, standard numbers and pay grades made their tasks much easier. Because a group of 1000 soldiers with their officers would have been paid the same amount throughout the army, a total payroll could be produced by simply multiplying a uniform figure by the required number of thousand men, then adding the salaries of the commanders and their staff officers[45].

For an emperor, general or other strategist, having a list of round numbers for army units that could be consulted easily, or even committed to memory, was a great help in assessing where, when or whether certain numbers of troops could be mustered for a campaign. It also greatly simplified calculations of what the campaign pay for various different combinations of soldiers would be. Standardization of army units meant that contingents brought from several different themes and tagmata could be readily assembled side by side on the battlefield. As with Roman legions, such standardization also simplified the process of laying out military camps[46].

Round numbers were particularly helpful in making the changes needed to reorganize the army from time to time. The detailed information supplied by al-Jarmī for 840 and the official rank list known as the *Tacticon Uspensky* for 842/3 reveal a great deal about the military reorganization and pay increases ordered by the Emperor Theophilus (829-42) in 839[47]. At that date Theophilus and his advisers evidently calculated from their treasury records that they could afford almost to double the military payroll to 20,000 pounds of gold. They seem to have decided to give the officers one-quarter of the total, or 5000 pounds, leaving the 120,000 soldiers an average of an eighth of a pound each (nine nomismata). Once these decisions had been made, an expert mathematician must have been assigned the task of apportioning the officers' pay by the appropriate ranks and numbers to produce the prearranged total. This expert was evidently ingenious enough to make his total come to almost precisely 20,000 pounds. His calculations were complicated, but they needed to be made only once. The main features of Theophilus' pay scale

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1995), pp. 52-56 (Nicephorus II, *Praecepta Militaria*, ch. 5) and 116-40 (Nicephorus Uranus, *Tactica*, chs. 61-62).

[45] Cf. the reconstructed payrolls in Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, pp. 129-34, 142-43, 150 and 152.

[46] On Roman camps, see now A. Richardson, 'The Order of Battle in the Roman Army: Evidence from Marching Camps', *Oxford Journal of Archeology* XX (2001), pp. 171-85.

[47] On this reorganization, see W. T. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival, 780-842* (Stanford, 1988), pp. 312-19.

seem to have remained in place for more than two centuries, and when later emperors wanted to reduce military pay they usually did it by debasing the coinage instead of lowering the rates[48].

Thus the round and regular numbers in the sources that some modern scholars find implausible were well suited to the needs of the Byzantines who used them. This is one reason that Byzantine military units seem normally to have been kept up to strength, like Roman legions; sometimes, as the papyrus figures indicate, they were a bit over strength. An army can function properly with units of widely varying sizes only if it is relatively small, or loosely organized, or supplied with expert record keepers. Modern armies satisfy the last condition, having officers and officials capable of handling detailed records and complicated calculations[49]. Medieval western European armies, the armies of the small Greek city-states known to Polybius, and the Byzantine army as it was reconstituted after 1081 were usually so small and loosely organized that they were not very hard to keep track of. The earlier Byzantine army, however, like its Roman predecessor, was large, tightly organized, and mostly run by officers and officials of limited literacy and rudimentary numeracy. For them, standardization was a practical necessity. The sources show that the army was accordingly standardized.

The alternative to this conclusion would be to assume a vast but inexplicable conspiracy on the part of many Greek, Latin and Arabic sources over hundreds of years, dedicated to perpetuating the falsehood that the Byzantine army favored standardized numbers in its organization and pay scale. Even if that alternative were not absurd, why should modern scholars want to think that the Byzantine army repudiated the sort of standardization that had served the Roman army so well for so long? One reason, already mentioned, is that some of them assume the Byzantine army before the eleventh century resembled medieval western European and later Byzantine armies. Another reason is doubtless the presumption of Marxists and many others that large institutions evolve according to organic historical processes, or at least for ideological reasons, rather than being organized for purely practical purposes. A final reason is probably the preference of some medievalists for regarding Byzantium as a separate medieval entity that was

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[48] See Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, pp. 135-41.

[49] Of course, modern armies also show a preference for standardized numbers, which are no longer strictly necessary but remain convenient for many of the same reasons that applied in Rome and Byzantium.

distinct from the ancient Roman Empire[50]. This last view, though not entirely wrong, was not shared by the Byzantines themselves, who always called themselves 'Romans', even if they called themselves that in Greek.

[50] On this preference, see W. Treadgold, 'The Break in Byzantium and the Gap in Byzantine Studies', *Byzantinische Forschungen* XIV (1990), pp. 289-316 [Study 1 in this book].

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THE HISTORICITY OF IMPERIAL BRIDE-SHOWS

Seven independent Byzantine sources record that five times in the eighth and ninth centuries the winner in a competition of beautiful women became the bride of an emperor or future emperor. These sources, four written by contemporaries, include two chronicles, an oration by the emperor Leo VI (882–912), and four lives of saints. Without explicitly questioning this evidence, historians largely ignored the shows until 1979, when I published an article arguing for their historical importance[1]. In 1985 my article provoked a response by the late Swedish philologist Lennart Rydén, who maintained that the shows were not merely unimportant as historical events but entirely fictional[2]. Since that time, several historians have summarily dismissed Rydén's arguments as inadequate to discredit such overwhelming evidence[3]. Yet several other scholars have accepted Rydén's objections and conclusions, often after considering only a fraction of that evidence[4]. The attack on the historicity of the bride-shows seems therefore to call for a more detailed response. Here I shall again review the sources and the arguments against accepting them, considering the five recorded shows in chronological order.

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[1] W. Treadgold, The Bride-Shows of the Byzantine Emperors. *Byz* 49 (1979) 395–413 [Study 14 in this book]. Most of this article was first presented in a lecture to the Oxford Byzantine Society in May 2001 at the kind invitation of Professor Elizabeth Jeffreys.

[2] L. Rydén, The Bride-Shows at the Byzantine Court – History or Fiction? *Eranos* 83 (1985) 175–91.

[3] The dissenters include L.-M. Hans, Der Kaiser als Märchenprinz: Brautschau und Heiratspolitik in Konstantinopel 395–882. *JÖB* 38 (1988) 46–52, and G. Dagron, Nés dans la pourpre. *TM* 12 (1994) 137–40.

[4] Those who agree with Rydén include R.-J. Lilie, Byzanz unter Eirene und Konstantin VI. (780–802). Frankfurt am Main 1996, 42–43 Claudia Ludwig, Sonderformen byzantinischer Hagiographie und ihr literarisches Vorbild. Frankfurt am Main 1997, 104–45 (repeating Rydén's arguments and adding others I find even more farfetched), and Martha Vinson, The Life of Theodora and the Rhetoric of the Byzantine Bride-Show. *JÖB* 49 (1999) 31–60 (repeating Rydén's arguments). P. Speck, Eine Brautschau für Staurakios? *JÖB* 49 (1999) 26–30, discusses only the show of 807, relying on Rydén's arguments and some others that I find arbitrary and implausible.

The source for the first recorded bride-show, which reportedly preceded a wedding in November 788, is the *Life of St. Philaretus the Almsgiver* by Philaretus' grandson Nicetas of Amnia. Nicetas dates his own work to 821/22, when he was in exile for a reason he fails to mention. His grandfather St. Philaretus was a provincial landowner in Paphlagonia who had allegedly bankrupted himself by his generosity. According to his *Life*, his granddaughter Maria was selected to compete for the hand of the emperor Constantine VI (780–97) by a panel of imperial envoys, who visited her village of Amnia on their travels to identify suitable candidates. At a bride-show subsequently held in Constantinople, Maria was chosen to marry Constantine by his mother, the empress Irene (797–802)[5].

Following arguments that had already been made by Paul Speck, Rydén attacked the historicity of this bride-show by attacking the historical value of Nicetas' whole work[6]. According to Rydén, Nicetas had three purposes in writing: to suppress the failure of his cousin's marriage to Constantine VI, which ended in divorce in 795, to please the emperor Michael II (820–29), who married Maria's daughter Euphrosyne, and to tell a good story[7]. The first two motives, however, would not have required any distortions or omissions in the *Life of Philaretus*, because the *Life* ends with Philaretus' death in 792, before the divorce. Though in my opinion Michael married Euphrosyne in 824, at least two years after Nicetas wrote, in a new edition of the *Life of Philaretus* Rydén restated his view that the *Life* was a sort of "wedding gift" for Michael and Euphrosyne, and that Nicetas hoped it would persuade the emperor to recall him from exile[8].

Nicetas' desire to tell a good story may well have distorted the earlier part of the *Life of Philaretus*, which is loosely modeled on the Book of Job and set in Philaretus' home village, a place unknown to most of Nicetas' likely readers. Yet the *Life* changes dramatically in tone in its latter part, which bears no resemblance to the story of Job and is set at the imperial court[9].

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[5] *Life of Philaretus*, now ed. L. Rydén, The Life of St. Philaretos the Merciful Written by his Grandson Niketas: A Critical Edition with Introduction, Translation, Notes, and Indices. Uppsala 2002.

[6] P. Speck, Kaiser Konstantin VI.: Die Legitimation einer fremden und der Versuch einer eigenen Herrschaft. Munich 1978, 204–7.

[7] Rydén, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 2), 180–82.

[8] Rydén, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 5), 49–50; *cf.* W. Treadgold, The Byzantine Revival, 780–842. Stanford 1988, 246–47 and n. 339.

[9] Rydén, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 5), 16, himself acknowledged that "in this tale there is a gradual transition from fiction to reality." *Cf.* A. Kazhdan, A History of

Neither Rydén nor those who agree with him have ever explained how Nicetas could expect Michael II (or any informed contemporary) to believe a fabrication about an imperial marriage that had occurred thirty-four years earlier, well within living memory. Nor can they explain how Euphrosyne herself, who had lived with her mother for many years in the same monastery, could have been ignorant of the circumstances of her own parents' marriage. Nor did Rydén suggest how and why, without gathering candidates in the manner described by the *Life*, Irene selected the granddaughter of an obscure and impoverished magnate from the tiny and distant village of Amnia. So far, Rydén's argument seems not only baseless but incredible.

The source for the second bride-show, which reportedly preceded a wedding on December 20, 807, is the chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. This source, compiled by Theophanes from material collected by his friend George Syncellus, was completed just five or six years after the show, between September 813 and December 814[10]. According to the chronicle, the emperor Nicephorus I (802–11) assembled girls from all over the empire in order to choose a wife for his son Stauracius (811). At the show Nicephorus selected Theophano of Athens, a relative of the late empress Irene. The chronicler, who consistently vilifies Nicephorus, adds that Theophano had already been betrothed to another man with whom she had had intercourse "many times" (πολλάκις), and was less beautiful than two other contestants, whom Nicephorus himself seduced[11].

Rydén, recognizing the evident fact that Nicephorus wanted to associate his new dynasty with Theophano's relative Irene, asked, "why arrange a bride-show if Theophano was already engaged and apparently not very beautiful?" He concluded that the chronicler invented the show in order to discredit Nicephorus. Even while conceding that the chronicler "writes as if this method of finding a bride for the imperial bridegroom was a traditional possibility", Rydén declared that "there is no record of a predecessor" because the *Life of Philaretus* is "both later … and unreliable …". According to Rydén, since the show had no historical precedent, the chronicler must have

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Byzantine Literature (650–850). Athens 1999, 281–91 (though here Kazhdan does not concern himself with the historicity of bride-shows, which he informed me he accepted).

[10] See most recently C. Mango and R. Scott, The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Oxford 1997, lii-lxiii.

[11] Theophanes 483.

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"borrowed the bride-show motif from literature, although I cannot point to any particular source"[12].

However, even if Theophano was chosen in advance, and neither virginal nor attractive, a bride-show would have allowed Nicephorus to claim that he had demonstrated her virtue and beauty by staging her victory over a selection of the most virtuous and beautiful girls in the empire. Moreover, in all probability the chronicler invented his stories of Theophano's and Nicephorus' sexual activities, which he was in no position to have known in such detail and few if any of his readers could have known either. As I have remarked elsewhere, "While such gossip would have been easy to invent about a girl who had been engaged and an emperor who was a widower, Nicephorus would have been unlikely to expose his son to ridicule or to risk having a grandson of doubtful legitimacy ..."[13]. What the chronicler could not have done is expect readers with any knowledge of the court to believe in a very recent and public event that had never happened.

The rest of Rydén's argument is not merely baseless but circular. He can only maintain that the bride-show of 807 lacked an historical precedent on his own assumption that the bride-show of 788 was fictional. Yet the fact that Theophanes' chronicle mentions the bride-show as a recognized custom corroborates the historicity of the show of 788, because the chronicler must have been recalling an actual event, not its mention in the as yet unwritten *Life of Philaretus*. As Rydén accurately observed later in his article, "in the eighth century the literary output was too small to make the introduction of new motifs [like the bride-show] likely".[14]

The third bride-show, which reportedly led to a wedding on June 5, 830, is recorded by two independent sources, the chronicle of Symeon the Logothete (copied by the Pseudo-Symeon) and the *Life of St. Theodora the Empress*. Although the Logothete compiled his chronicle soon after 948, he evidently took the portion including the bride-show from a single, quite reliable source compiled between 855 and 865, twenty-five to thirty-five years after the show, again well within living memory[15]. The *Life of Theodora*

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[12] Rydén, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 2), 179–80.

[13] Treadgold, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 8), 153.

[14] Rydén, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 2), 190.

[15] See W. Treadgold, The Chronological Accuracy of the *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete for the Years 813–845. *DOP* 33 (1979) 171–94, esp. 180, 192, and 193–94. R.-J. Lilie *et al.*, Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit I (641–867): Prolegomena. Berlin 1998, 22 and 289–90, have attacked the reliability of Symeon's chronicle because it records the death of Manuel the Armenian in 838,

must be later than 867, though perhaps not by much[16]. Both sources say that girls were brought from various places to compete in a bride-show held for the young emperor Theophilus (829–42), who chose Theodora.

Symeon adds that the girls were selected by Euphrosyne, Michael II's widow and Theophilus' stepmother, who held the show in the Triclinium of the Pearl in the Great Palace and gave Theophilus a golden apple to award to his choice. Seeing one beautiful contestant, the poetess Cassia, Theophilus tactlessly remarked that evil had come to man through a woman. Cassia gently responded that better things had also come from a woman. (The references, quoted in verse, are of course to Eve and the Virgin.) Wounded by Cassia's retort, Theophilus chose Theodora[17]. In the *Life of Theodora*, Theodora is naturally the heroine. When Theophilus gives all the contestants apples (apparently not golden but real ones), she is the only contestant who keeps her apple and produces another, a gift from a monk in Nicomedia who had prophesied to her what would happen[18].

Rydén dismissed the *Life of Theodora* in a footnote, observing that by having Theodora win because of her piety rather than her beauty it makes the bride-show "meaningless, at least from an historical point of view"[19]. Rydén however overlooked several indications that character and orthodoxy were just as important as beauty for bride-show contestants[20]. He also failed to notice that these two sources, with their radically different interests in the event, cannot derive from a single literary source and therefore appear to be independent reports of the event itself. While mentioning the late date of

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though according to them a seal of Manuel's proves he was still alive after 843; but this seal should be dated before 829 (see *infra* n. 22).

[16] See most recently Martha Vinson, Life of St. Theodora the Empress, in Alice-Mary Talbot, ed., Byzantine Defenders of Images: Eight Saints' Lives in Translation. Washington 1998, 355 and n. 5 (for a date between 867 and 912), and D. Afinogenov, The Bride-Show of Theophilos: Some Notes on the Sources. *Eranos* 95 (1997) 10–18 (for a "rather late" date of the *Life*, but not of all its components). Neither argument is conclusive.

[17] On the text of this passage in Symeon's chronicle, which is still not properly edited, see W. Treadgold, The Problem of the Marriage of the Emperor Theophilus. *GRBS* 16 (1975) 327–29. [Symeon's chronicle has finally appeared in a modern edition by S. Wahlgren, Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon. Berlin, 2006.]

[18] A. Markopoulos, Βίος τῆς αὐτοκράτειρας Θεοδώρας. *Symmeikta* 5 (1983) 249–85, esp. 259–60 on the bride-show.

[19] Rydén, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 2), 188–89 n. 52.

[20] See Treadgold, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 1), 409–10.

Symeon's chronicle, Rydén ignored the much earlier date of its source, which again was so early that knowledgeable readers could hardly have accepted a falsification of such an important public event.

Rydén raised three specific objections to the version in Symeon's chronicle. First, he assumed that Euphrosyne had from the first wanted her stepson to marry her fellow Paphlagonian Theodora, so that a bride-show was unnecessary[21]. Euphrosyne, who had probably never set foot in Paphlagonia, may actually not have cared much about her mother's native province; but she and Theophilus surely cared that Theodora was the niece of Manuel the Armenian, who had been an important general since 813 and had recently served as preceptor to the young Theophilus[22]. Yet it is far from certain that Euphrosyne, who had chosen all the contestants, preferred Theodora to the others, or could have dictated any choice to her strong-willed stepson. As a secret iconophile, Euphrosyne presumably wanted her stepson to choose an iconophile bride; but both Theodora and the rejected Cassia were iconophiles, and the empress could have made sure that the other candidates were iconophiles as well. Even if she did advise Theophilus to choose Theodora, the show would still have served its usual function of certifying the winning contestant's beauty and virtue.

Second, Rydén repeated an old observation of J. B. Bury's that the show could not have been held in the Triclinium of the Pearl, which was built

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[21] Rydén, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 2), 187–88.

[22] On Manuel's earlier career as a general, see Treadgold, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 8), 198 and 222, and on Manuel's preceptorship for Theophilus, see G. Zacos and A. Veglery, Byzantine Lead Seals I.2. Basel 1972, 1190–91 (no. 2151A). Lilie *et al.*, PmbZ III. Berlin 2000, Manuel #4707, 136–41, assume that the person holding authority over "the five themes" of Anatolia in 819 was not Manuel but the Metropolitan of Smyrna; but a bishop with jurisdiction over such a wide area delimited by military districts would be unparalleled and nonsensical, while Manuel's commanding all five themes explains, as the editors cannot, why some sources say Manuel commanded the Anatolics and others say the Armeniacs. They also assume that the seal referring to Manuel as βάγουλος means that Manuel was guardian of Michael III after 842; but the evidence seems clear that Manuel died in 838 (see Treadgold, *op. cit.* [*supra* n. 15], 180–83), and coins give the title δεσπότης to Michael (and Theophilus) only before his reign. Lilie and his collaborators identify this "prince" as Michael only because they accept the erroneous theory of E. W. Brooks that Theophilus married *ca.* 821 and was therefore much older than the sources indicate (see *infra* n. 24).

during Theophilus' reign[23]. While this objection made sense on Bury's mistaken assumption that Theophilus' marriage took place in 821, Rydén himself accepted Symeon's date of June 830[24]. This date leaves eight months of Theophilus' reign for the completion of the triclinium, which the show probably inaugurated. Finally, Rydén assumed that the story of Cassia's exchange of verses with Theophilus was invented to discredit the iconoclast emperor, especially because Rydén thought Cassia was too old to be a plausible bride in 830[25]. Again, this is far from clear. Though Cassia's age is uncertain, she could easily have been of marriageable age in 830[26]. Her recorded exchange with Theophilus has nothing to do with Iconoclasm, and implies that she was a worthier candidate than Theodora, the iconophile saint who later abolished Iconoclasm. In any case, even if the exchange of verses was a pious elaboration, that would no more discredit the essential historicity of this bride-show than salacious elaborations in Theophanes' chronicle would discredit the bride-show of 807.

More recently, Dimitry Afinogenov has found the source of Theophilus' and Cassia's verses in a homily by a not easily identified author of the fifth or early sixth century, and consequently concluded that the exchange was fictional. He acknowledges, however, that Symeon's chronicle describes the verses it quotes as the general sense but "not the exact wording" of Theophilus' and Cassia's remarks; such a candid admission suggests that the chronicle improved upon the words of the exchange but accurately reported its substance. Although Afinogenov argues that the *Life of Theodora* is fairly late, he concedes its complete independence of Symeon's account, which again indicates that their common link was an historical event, not a literary source[27].

The bride-show of 855, like that of 830, is attested by two sources. The earlier is the funeral oration for Basil I (867–886) delivered by his supposed son Leo VI in 886. Leo mentions that his mother Eudocia Ingerina

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[23] Rydén, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 2), 188, citing J. B. Bury, A History of the Eastern Roman Empire. London 1912, 82 n. 1.

[24] For a discussion and refutation of Brooks's theory, see Treadgold, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 17), 325–41.

[25] Rydén, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 2), 188, thinks that Cassia was "born at the beginning of the century", while in 830 Theophilus was 17 (Treadgold, *op. cit.* [*supra* n. 17], 335–38).

[26] I believe she was about 22 at that date; see Treadgold, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 8), 269.

[27] Afinogenov, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 16), 10–18 (quotation from 12).

competed in a bride-show held for Michael III (842–67), who, because God had destined her for another husband, chose an inferior bride[28]. Rydén pointed out that Michael had already made Eudocia his mistress before 855, when Michael's mother Theodora, who considered Eudocia shameless, forced him to marry another woman. Ten years later Michael, having packed his mother off to a convent, made a nominal marriage for his mistress with the future emperor Basil I. By this marriage Michael was probably trying to legitimize his child, the future Leo VI, whom the pregnant Eudocia was soon to bear[29].

According to Rydén, the bride-show "motif makes it possible for Leo to transform the scandalous background of his parents' marriage and the delicate question of his own paternity into a story that is flattering to his mother and implies that God regarded Basil as superior to Michael"[30]. First, however, Rydén never established that any such literary motif was current at the time, since even inaccurate historical accounts would not constitute a literary motif if they were meant to be believed as history. Second, the bride-show had nothing to do with Leo's legitimacy one way or the other. Third, Leo was by no means flattering Eudocia by recalling that she had been rejected in a bride-show, or glorifying Basil by recalling that he had married a rejected contestant. Probably Theodora had used the previously established bride-show requirement of virtue to eliminate Eudocia for not being a virgin; but in any case she had been found inferior to the nonentity who was chosen. Although in his oration Leo apparently felt unable to omit the well-known fact of the show, he mentioned it as briefly as possible. Most people who heard his long and tedious speech probably missed the reference entirely, as he would have preferred. Anyone who noticed the hurried allusion probably thought that Leo had finessed the matter about as well as could be expected.

The other source for this show is the *Life of St. Irene of Chrysobalantum*. The best clue to its date is its author's remark that the rule of the Macedonian dynasty had lasted "to the fourth, or indeed (ἢ καὶ) the fifth, generation". The author's uncertainty about the fifth generation, which was that of the emperor Basil II (963–1025), suggests a date for the *Life* between 963 and 976, when the co-emperors Nicephorus Phocas and John

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[28] A. Vogt and I. Hausherr, Oraison funèbre de Basile I par son fils Léon VI le Sage. *OC* 26 (1932) 38–79, esp. 54 on the bride-show.

[29] See C. Mango, Eudocia Ingerina, the Normans, and the Macedonian Dynasty. *ZRVI* 14/15 (1973) 17–27. The rambling and inconclusive discussion of Leo's paternity in Shaun Tougher, The Reign of Leo VI (886–912). Leiden 1997, 23–67, adds nothing of significance.

[30] Rydén, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 2), 182–83.

Tzimisces held power and no one could be sure that Basil would ever actually rule[31]. The *Life* records that St. Irene, a member of the noble family of the Guberii, came from Cappadocia to compete in Michael III's show, since she was distinguished by the physical and moral beauty required of contestants. She was accompanied by her sister, evidently also a contestant, who later married the emperor's uncle, the Caesar Bardas.

This *Life*'s account of the bride-show of 855 is however chronologically incompatible with two other incidents in the same text. It mentions that on her way to the show Irene visited the hermit St. Joannicius, who had however died in 846. Interestingly, the *Life* reports that Joannicius was often invisible, though he took shape to predict that Irene would be the abbess of Chrysobalantum. The *Life* adds that, after Irene failed to win the bride-show of 855, the nuns of Chrysobalantum could not persuade her to become their abbess until they referred the matter to the Patriarch Methodius, who had however died in 847. According to the *Life*, Methodius declared that God had already miraculously revealed their choice to him before he consecrated Irene as abbess[32].

Because of these chronological incompatibilities and the vagueness of most of the *Life*, Rydén rejected it as an historical source, while its editor, Jan Rosenqvist, has pronounced it fictional, like the bride-show and even St. Irene herself[33]. Skepticism about this admittedly dubious *Life* may well have been what first led Rydén to skepticism about bride-shows in general. Yet the *Life of Irene*, unreliable though it may be, is at worst no evidence for the shows, not evidence that they never happened. Moreover, Rydén and Rosenqvist have probably gone too far in rejecting the whole *Life* and Irene herself as fantasies. After all, according to the *Life* Irene's corpse was at the time of writing still in the Convent of Chrysobalantum working miracles at her tomb, which was tended by a relative of hers whom she had assisted

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[31] *The Life of St. Irene Abbess of Chrysobalanton*, ed. and trans. J. O. Rosenqvist. Uppsala 1986, chap. 12, 52. At 52–53 n. 7, the editor argues for a translation of ἢ καὶ "not as truly disjunctive but as marking a climax", and so dates the *Life* between 976 and 1025; but he admits that the words "could possibly be taken as a hint at the conditions during Basil II's minority" (*cf.* Rosenqvist's remarks at xxvii–xxix). Since the former interpretation would make the reference to the fourth generation pointless, the latter seems clearly preferable. (On the other hand, when I wrote in 1979 in Treadgold, *op. cit.* [*supra* n. 1], 404, that the *Life* was "probably early", my youthful intuition was badly at fault.)

[32] *Life of St. Irene*, chap. 3, 8–12 (for the bride-show and prophecy of Joannicius) and chap. 7, 24–28 (for the prophecy and consecration by Methodius).

[33] Rydén, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 2), 189–90; Rosenqvist, *op. cit.*, xxiii–xlviii.

during her life. I would rather conclude that by the time the self-effacing Irene died (at age 97) all that her biographer could gather about her early years was scanty and unreliable hearsay[34].

Although the miraculous stories of Irene's encounters with Sts. Joannicius and Methodius look very much like pious fictions made up to glorify Irene, her admirers had no reason to invent her failed candidacy in the bride-show, which showed that she had not so much rejected the world as been rejected by it. Her appearance as a contestant provides the only plausible explanation of why she had come from her home in faraway Cappadocia to her convent in Constantinople, or of how her sister had happened to marry the Caesar. If Irene did compete in the show of 855, she was born around 840 and died around 937, only about thirty years before her *Life* was written. For all its defects, her *Life* is certainly independent of Leo VI's oration, and it therefore corroborates Leo's mention of the bride-show of 855.

The source for the last known bride-show, that of 882, is the *Life of St. Theophano*, the wife of Leo VI and reportedly the winning contestant. According to this *Life*, after the emperor Basil I had assembled girls chosen for their virtue and beauty to compete for Leo's hand in the usual fashion, Leo's mother Eudocia selected her own relative Theophano to be Leo's bride. The author of the *Life* describes himself as a relative of Theophano. Alexander Alexakis has made convincing use of an anonymous scholion to identify the *Life*'s author with the Magister Slocacas, who is known to have addressed an account of Theophano's miracles to Leo VI himself[35].

Rydén hypothesized that the author of the *Life of Theophano* invented the bride-show "to exalt Theophano's beauty and grace", and observed that, as a relative of the empress Eudocia who chose her, "Theophano was obviously married to Leo for dynastic reasons, and thus the whole bride-show is unlikely to be historical"[36]. Once again, however, Rydén overlooked the obvious function of the shows in authenticating beauty and virtue when these otherwise might be doubted, and the improbability that anyone would try to falsify the circumstances of Leo's marriage for a contemporary audience. That improbability is even greater because the audience apparently included

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[34] *Life of St. Irene*, chap. 24, 112 (for her tomb) and chap. 23, 110–12 (for her age at her death and for her relative).

[35] A. Alexakis, Leo VI, Theophano, a *Magistros* Called Slokakas, and the *Vita Theophano* (*BHG* 1794), in S. Efthymiadis *et al.*, eds., Bosphorus: Essays in Honor of Cyril Mango. Amsterdam 1995, 45–56.

[36] Rydén, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 2), 186–87.

Leo himself, who had detested his late wife and had no reason to want his marriage idealized[37].

Besides these observations about specific bride-shows, Rydén also cited some general arguments that he thought undermined the historicity of all of them together. He declared, "Scholars have been puzzled" that the shows "appeared so suddenly and disappeared so soon"[38]. Yet Rydén never explained why this or any other historical practice should not have been introduced at a specific time, or why or how it might have been expected to evolve gradually. Nor has he or anyone else identified any suitable opportunities for later shows during the next 175 years, because during that time, by historical accident, no emperors were directly succeeded by their sons[39].

Later, contradicting his own implication that the shows should have evolved gradually if they were historical, Rydén argued that if the shows had "belonged to a real custom … the descriptions of them would be uniform, given that in all other cases the Byzantine protocol was so strict"[40]. In fact, the differences among the descriptions rather suggest the differing interests of independent observers, whether or not the protocol was the same (and in other ceremonies it was not nearly so rigid as Rydén implies). On the contrary, uniformity is what we would expect of *literary* influence, because one author would have copied another. Rydén's failure to find the slightest textual similarity among the seven sources is a devastating weakness in his argument.

Finally, Rydén alleged that "to a high degree, the texts in which the Byzantine bride-shows are described" are "anonymous", like "the literary genre of the fairy tales"[41]. In fact, among Byzantine texts, the sources for the bride-shows are comparatively early and well attributed. Of the seven, five have identifiable authors, one describing each show: Nicetas of Amnia for 788, Theophanes Confessor with George Syncellus for 807, Symeon the Logothete for 830, the emperor Leo VI for 855, and Slocacas the Magister for 882. At one point Rydén seemingly let slip his real objection, which has nothing to do with his textual arguments: he called bride-shows a "frivolous custom", apparently too frivolous for real emperors to have adopted[42].

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[37] See Treadgold, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 1), 408.
[38] Rydén, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 2), 177–78.
[39] Treadgold, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 1), 412–13.
[40] Rydén, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 2), 190.
[41] Rydén, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 2), 190–91.
[42] Rydén, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 2), 178.

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Any serious case against the historicity of the bride-shows would need to demonstrate that the obvious connections among them can be explained more easily as literary influence than as historical causation. Rydén did not even hypothesize literary influences that might link the seven texts, and did not identify a single verbal parallel between any two of them. On the other hand, after the first recorded show each subsequent one occurred well within living memory of a previous show or shows, so that many people at court would surely have remembered the precedent, and if necessary reminded the emperor or empress of it. Usually no reminding would have been needed, because the links among the empresses who held and competed in the shows are obvious. The second show selected a relative of the empress Irene, who had held the first show. The third show was held by the empress Euphrosyne, daughter of the winner of the first show. The fourth show was held by the empress Theodora, winner of the third show. The fifth show was held by the empress Eudocia, a competitor in the fourth show. Instead of these self-evident historical connections, Rydén assumed separate falsifications in seven independent and mostly early sources which, apparently by pure accident, produced a consistent and historically coherent myth.

The unjustified skepticism that imperial bride-shows happened seems to be based on a justified skepticism that imperial marriages really depended on open competitions to identify the best and most beautiful bride in the empire. The empresses and emperors who chose the winning candidates plainly had other motives, most of which can be plausibly conjectured. In 788 Irene wanted a daughter-in-law from an obscure and impoverished family that would be unable to support her son against herself. In 807 Nicephorus wanted a daughter-in-law who could connect his new dynasty with the family of his predecessor Irene. In 830 Euphrosyne wanted a daughter-in-law who shared her iconophile sentiments, like either Theodora or Cassia; probably she either recommended one of them to her iconoclast stepson or made sure that all the contestants were iconophiles. In 855 Theodora wanted a daughter-in-law who, unlike Eudocia Ingerina, would not encourage her son to assert himself. In 882 Eudocia wanted a daughter-in-law who as her relative would be loyal to her. In most cases the wishes of the bridegrooms were ignored.

What made bride-shows attractive to the imperial family was the illusion, carefully spread over a wide territory by the inspectors who recruited contestants, that the winner would be the most beautiful and virtuous bride in the empire. This was no doubt Irene's idea in starting the practice in the first place. Her motives would have been similar whether, as seems likely, she had been humiliated by Charlemagne's breaking off his previous engagement of his daughter to her son, or Irene had broken the engagement herself so as to

avoid having too powerful a daughter-in-law[43]. The bride-shows obscured the awkward facts that Irene and Theodora chose nonentities to marry their sons, that Eudocia chose her own relative, that Nicephorus was trying to distract attention from his usurpation by a dynastic marriage, and that Euphrosyne married her iconoclast stepson to an iconophile. Though the sources mention none of these apparent motives, they report favorably on all the shows but that of Nicephorus. Even in that case, the chronicler's denunciations of the circumstances betray a fear that the show in itself would make a good impression on his readers.

The alternative to believing that the bride-shows were historical events is extremely unlikely, and no one has yet made any systematic attempt to defend it. We would need to assume that the bride-shows were deliberate fictions, separately concocted by at least five people with obscure motives, who somehow succeeded in deceiving many others, including well-informed courtiers and emperors, usually about events in the very recent past. Anyone who proposes this hypothesis should be ready to conjecture in detail what sort of person or persons invented the original concept of the bride-show, why this was done, by what means of transmission this person or persons influenced each of our sources, which of the sources were deceivers and which were deceived, and why each of them chose to continue perpetuating or believing these falsehoods. Anyone seriously attempting to answer these questions should also try to produce a full *stemma* showing the relations among all the hypothetical sources, written or oral, along with their conjectural dates or at least relative chronology. The result, even if not actually self-contradictory, would be a lengthy chain of arbitrary and farfetched conjectures, but it could be called a kind of source criticism, unlike what has been offered so far.

In comparison with the extreme improbabilities involved in rejecting the sources for bride-shows, what difficulties lie on the other side? Why should we prefer to think that bride-shows were invented by six writers and one Byzantine ruler (Leo VI) in order to deceive the public, rather than think that the shows were in fact staged by five Byzantine rulers in order to impress the public? The only apparent motive for such a preference is the desire of some contemporary scholars to keep political history separate from literary, cultural, and social history, by distinguishing the sober and rational actions of emperors and empresses from the exotic and irrational imaginings of storytellers and showmen[44]. Since this is impossible in the case of the emperor

[43] See Treadgold, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 8), 89–91.

[44] *Cf.* Afinogenov, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 16), 10: "Here again, as in many other cases, the major difficulties arise from the fact that the researchers have to operate in

Leo VI, to conjecture that he told a frivolous lie is apparently more acceptable than to believe that the empress Theodora staged a frivolous ceremony.

Yet are imperial bride-shows really any more exotic or irrational than an imperial throne room filled with roaring golden lions, twittering golden birds, and a mechanical throne that raised the emperor to the ceiling? Although no one has yet suggested that these publicly displayed ornaments were hoaxes, sustained for more than a century by several Byzantine chroniclers and Constantine VII's *De Ceremoniis* with the cooperation of Liudprand of Cremona, that suggestion would be no harder to defend than the theory that bride-shows never happened[45]. In the absence of a detailed and documented argument, which in both cases has yet to be presented, neither idea should be taken seriously.

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an interdisciplinary 'twilight zone' between history and what in Russian is called *literaturovedenie* (the German translation would be *Literaturwissenschaft*). … Now, if we find a positive answer to the question of the relationship between 'the bride-shows' as a motif of Byzantine literature … and 'the Byzantine bride-shows' as a historical reality, we shall be able to extract the whole chain of literature-turned-history in our sources, thus coming much closer to understanding their mentality and their way of handling the information we are striving to extricate from them." Note that Afinogenov's approach assumes without argument that the bride-shows are fictional ("literature-turned-history").

[45] For these well-attested and (so far) unquestioned decorations in the imperial throne room, see, *e.g.*, Treadgold, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 8), 283–85 and n. 390.

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BYZANTIUM, THE RELUCTANT WARRIOR*

Several years ago I was asked to help design a Byzantine war game, and I needed to choose a Byzantine war to make the game about. From my war-gaming days long ago, I remembered that war-gamers like wars that ended in total victory for one side, like the American Civil War or the two world wars. Thinking over the many wars the Byzantines fought, I noticed something I had never fully realized before: that Byzantium seldom if ever fought a foreign war in which it sought total victory. The only wars the Byzantines usually wanted to win outright were civil wars.

This observation raises some questions about the Byzantines' attitude toward warfare. A good deal has been written on that topic in recent years, especially on whether the Byzantines had an idea of holy war; but none of the theories about what the Byzantines thought seems quite to fit how the Byzantines acted. Of course, like all of us, the Byzantines acted in ways that fell short of their expressed ideals; for example, that Byzantine texts consistently condemn adultery does not necessarily mean that the Byzantines never committed adultery. Yet the Byzantines' stated opinions about war are a good place to start examining what their attitudes toward warfare were.

I

I will begin with the views of St. Basil of Caesarea on warfare, because the Byzantines considered them authoritative. What St. Basil wrote is this:

> Our fathers did not count killing in battle as murder; they granted pardon, it seems to me, to those who were defending the cause of righteousness and piety. Perhaps, however, it is best to advise those

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* For historical orientation these notes refer largely to my own *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) since no other reference work is as comprehensive for the present purpose. For example, George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State,* rev. ed., trans. Joan Hussey (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1969) mentions fewer than half of the civil wars listed in the Appendix to this paper.

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> [soldiers], because their hands are not clean, to abstain for three years from communion only[1].

In this passage St. Basil seems somewhat conflicted. He did not consider killing in battle as being as bad as murder, and he was not absolutely sure it required penance at all. Three years' exclusion from the eucharist (though not from church) may seem harsh to us; but Basil imposed full excommunication for ten years on women who had had abortions, and full excommunication for thirty years on ordinary murderers[2]. Yet Basil was lenient only with killers in wars for "the cause of righteousness and piety". Even in such wars, the killing itself was by no means meritorious: the soldier's hands were still unclean. However, as long as the cause was just, St. Basil did not distinguish between wars with orthodox Christians and wars with pagans or heretics.

This brings us to the recent controversy over whether the Byzantines had a concept of holy war. Here I find myself in the odd position of accepting most of the arguments of one side but agreeing with the conclusion of the other. Angeliki Laiou and Nicholas Oikonomides have argued that the Byzantines had no concept of holy war, because true holy wars required conditions that did not apply at Byzantium: that the war be approved by a religious authority, be fought avowedly against non-Christians or heretics, enjoy popular support, and be an offensive war[3]. Athina Kolia-Dermitzaki and Tia Kolbaba have disagreed, arguing that these conditions were either met at Byzantium or not necessary for a holy war[4]. They rightly point out that the Byzantine emperor, who declared wars, could himself act as a religious

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[1] Basil of Caesarea, *The Letters*, ed. & trans. Roy J. DeFerrari, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926—34), Letter 188, canon 13. The translation given here is mine.

[2] Basil, *Letters,* Letter 188, canons 2 and 7.

[3] Angeliki Laiou, "On Just War in Byzantium", in *To Hellenikon: Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr.*, ed. John Langdon et al. (New Rochelle, NY: Artistide D. Caratzas, 1993), 1: 153-77; Nicholas Oikonomides, "The Concept of 'Holy War' and Two Byzantine Ivories", in *Peace and War in Byzantium: Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis, S.J.*, ed. Timothy Miller and John Nesbitt (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 62-86.

[4] Athina Kolia-Dermitzake, *Ho vyzantinos "hieros polemos": he ennoia kai he provole tou threskeutikou polemou sto Vyzantio [Byzantine "Holy War": the Idea and Propagation of Religious War in Byzantium]* (Athens: Historikes Ekdoseis St. D. Vasilopoulos, 1991), with English summary on 394-408, and Tia Kolbaba, "Fighting for Christianity: Holy War in the Byzantine Empire", *Byzantion* 68 (1998): 194-221.

authority; he surely did when he summoned church councils. They are also right that when Byzantium fought a non-Christian enemy Byzantine propaganda emphasized the fact, and such a war usually enjoyed some popular support[5]. They also seem to me right to argue that Byzantine wars should not be disqualified as holy wars simply because they were defensive. The Crusades themselves could be considered defensive wars, because they helped embattled Christians and reclaimed lands that had once been Christian. Muslims also thought defensive warfare could qualify as *jihad*, if it was fought against non-Muslims.

Nonetheless, I would agree with Laiou and Oikonomides that Byzantium had no concept of holy war, even in the restricted sense argued by Kolia-Dermitzaki and Kolbaba, which is already more limited than the Western Crusade or Muslim *jihad.* Kolbaba puts her case in very moderate terms: "The emperor's wars are God's work because all of his deeds are God's work"[6]. On such grounds the Byzantines called their emperor's palace the Sacred Palace, his bedroom the Sacred Bedchamber, and so on. Yet the very fact that the Byzantines used the words "sacred" and "holy" so freely for everything associated with their emperor makes it all the more significant that, to my knowledge, no one has found a Byzantine text that explicitly calls any war a holy war.

I strongly suspect that the phrase "holy war" would have struck most Byzantines as tasteless, if not blasphemous. To them war was not something morally neutral, like a palace or a bedroom, which association with the emperor could sanctify. The Byzantines were no more willing to call what the emperor fought a "holy war" than to call what the emperor did with the empress in the Sacred Bedchamber "sacred sex." Because the emperor needed to defend the empire against its enemies, just as he needed to have an heir to the throne, war (like sex) was a practical necessity for him in this fallen world. Under the right conditions it was not exactly evil; but it was *never* holy. By its very nature, war was, in St. Basil's words, "not clean".

My conclusion is that the Byzantines, unlike Muslims or Western Crusaders, had no special category of war against people who did not share

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[5] Kolia-Dermitzake, *Ho vyzantinos "hieros polemos"*, 146-316, discusses many Byzantine references to the righteousness of wars against the Persians, Arabs, and Turks. See also Michael Whitby, "*Deus Nobiscum*: Christianity and Warfare in Late Antiquity", in *Modus Operandi: Essays in Honor of Geoffrey Rickman*, ed. Michael Austin et al. (London: Institute of Classical Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 1998), 191-208.

[6] Kolbaba, "Fighting for Christianity", 203.

their faith. Among the Byzantines no wars were holy, not even those against Muslims, pagans, or heretics. In fact, if one were to look simply at the way the Byzantines acted, one would be tempted to conclude that the Byzantines were most reluctant to fight non-Christians, less reluctant to fight Christian foreigners, and least reluctant to fight their fellow Byzantine Christians.

For this reason Kolbaba's phrase "fighting for Christianity" seems wrong for the Byzantines, even though they carried crosses into battle and used the war cry "The Cross has conquered!" If the Byzantines preferred to fight for Christianity, why, for example, did the emperor Basil II prefer fighting the orthodox Christian Bulgarians to fighting Muslims – even when the Fatimid Caliph ordered all the churches in his Caliphate destroyed, including the Church of the Holy Sepulcher?[7] Another description that seems not to fit Byzantine practice is John Haldon's phrase "fighting for peace"[8]. Though almost every war is fought for peace on certain terms, you can usually achieve peace without fighting if you make enough concessions. If the Byzantines fought mainly for peace, why did they so often tolerate raiding by Huns, Arabs, Turks, and others, even when fighting those raiders might well have brought peace? And if the Byzantines were so enamored of peace, why did they so often raise armed revolts against their own emperors, often calling in Arabs, Turks, and others to help?[9]

Laiou is surely right that the Byzantines had a concept of "just war" – a war that, in St. Basil's rather vague words, "defend[ed] the cause of righteousness and piety." Drawing primarily on the history of Anna Comnena, but considering other relevant texts, Laiou has suggested five grounds that Byzantines cited for just wars: "self-defense", "recovery of territory", "breach of agreement", "averting a greater evil", and "pursuit of peace"[10]. As Laiou essentially admits, in practice most wars fought for the last three of these reasons turn out to be defensive wars. So we are left with two main types of war that the Byzantines considered just: defensive wars,

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[7] See Treadgold, *History*, 525-281.

[8] John Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565-1204* (London: UGL Press, 1999), 13-33. The idea of "fighting for peace" (itself a Stalinist slogan) is one of several of Haldon's interpretations of Byzantium that I find anachronistic and mistaken. Yet Haldon correctly concludes on p. 280 that Byzantium "was a society [...] in which warfare was universally seen as evil, even by the soldiers most actively involved".

[9] See the Appendix to this paper, which lists the Byzantine civil wars and notes which were fought with foreign support.

[10] Laiou, "On Just War in Byzantium".

and wars to reconquer territory that had previously been Byzantine. Though defending oneself in a civil war would qualify as defensive warfare, starting a civil war would be very hard to justify, except perhaps to "avert a greater evil", an elastic but not very satisfactory pretext.

II

In the rest of this paper I will discuss the sorts of wars that the Byzantines did fight, taking the foreign wars first and the civil wars second. The foreign wars can be subdivided into offensive wars, defensive wars, and (an intermediate type) wars of reconquest. I shall use the most inclusive dates for the Byzantine period, from 285 to 1461. Even though these dates may be a bit too inclusive for this purpose, they reveal something interesting about the offensive wars. By my count there were only two of them, both at the very beginning of the period, before many scholars would say the Roman Empire was Byzantine at all.

Both of these wars were fought against the Persian Empire. The first was a successful invasion of Persia in 298, the second a failed invasion in 363. Since both wars followed serious Persian attacks, they could be considered retaliatory or pre-emptive. Each had limited objectives, but took advantage of the fact that the Persian capital of Ctesiphon was not far from the border; after sacking Ctesiphon in the first war and failing to sack it in the second, neither expedition advanced farther[11]. Of particular interest is that both wars were started by pagan emperors: Diocletian and Julian. Consequently these wars seem not to reflect the developed attitudes of Byzantine Christians, who never fought such wars later[12].

No one would dispute that most Byzantine warfare throughout the empire's twelve centuries of existence was defensive. Though this fighting included forays into enemy territory, in the form of retaliatory raids or hot

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[11] Treadgold, *History*, 22-23 and 60-62.

[12] Admittedly, the first Christian emperor, Constantine I, seems to have been preparing a similar invasion of Persia when he died in 337; see Treadgold, *History*, 48, and Timothy Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 259. Yet Constantine had been raised a pagan and was baptized only on his deathbed; and since he ruled both East and West and had begun his rule in the West, his thinking may also be seen as part of the developing attitude toward warfare of the Western Church, which differed from the Eastern Church. Although in 572 Justin II provoked a war with Persia, he had no coherent plan for invading it; see Treadgold, *History*, 222-23.

pursuit, on the whole it was restrained and reactive. From the third through the sixth century, Goths, Sarmatians, Huns, Persians, and others raided Byzantine territory again and again. Often the Byzantines did nothing. Sometimes they paid the raiders not to raid; when the raiders raided anyway, usually the Byzantines either did nothing or paid them more[13]. The Byzantines did fight one great battle against the Goths, well inside Byzantine territory at Adrianople in 376, and lost disastrously. After that Byzantium resolved its Gothic problems not by major battles but by encouraging the Goths to go West, despite the unfortunate results for the Western Roman Empire.

Though the Byzantines often had to fight the Persians, they deterred them with a bare minimum of retaliation and bought them off with especially large payments[14]. Byzantium never seriously tried to recover the border territory it lost to Persia after Julian's failed invasion. The empire's next major foray into Persia was in 591, when the emperor Maurice, over the opposition of his advisers, helped restore the legitimate Persian king to his throne after a revolt[15]. Byzantium was rewarded with the return of some borderlands, eleven years of peace - and then a devastating Persian invasion of Byzantine Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. The empire briefly regained these from the Persians, only to lose them again to the Muslims after a brief resistance[16].

During most of the seventh and eighth centuries, the Byzantines simply accepted their loss of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt to the Muslims and of most of the Balkan Peninsula to the Avars and Slavs, who had overrun it during the Persian war. The empire made a feeble attempt to keep the Bulgars from taking a few of its remaining Balkan outposts, then accepted that loss as well. Byzantine efforts against both Bulgars and Muslims were essentially defensive until the tenth century, when the Byzantines made some reconquests to which we shall return.

In the mid-eleventh century Byzantium went back on the defensive against the Normans and Seljuk Turks - if one can call "defensive" a total failure to defend either southern Italy or Anatolia, which fell to the invaders.

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[13] The classic case is the Byzantines' treatment of the Huns in the early fifth century; see Treadgold, *History*, 88-97.

[14] See now Geoffrey Greatrex and Samuel Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars, Part II, AD 363-630: A Narrative Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2002).

[15] Treadgold, *History*, 230-32.

[16] I include in this brief resistance an abortive attempt to retake Alexandria in 645, just three years after it had been lost to the Muslims; Treadgold, *History*, 311-12.

After retaking some of Anatolia from the Turks, the Byzantines defended what they had for about 70 years. Then, plagued by civil wars, they lost much of the Balkans to the Serbs and Bulgarians, and still more, including Constantinople, to the westerners during the Fourth Crusade. After one last burst of reconquest, the Byzantines, with the help of more civil wars, slowly lost everything to the Ottoman Turks.

My point is not that the Byzantines defended themselves badly, because for the most part they defended themselves very well. After all, the empire lasted longer than all its enemies. It outlived the Persian Empire, two Muslim caliphates, two Bulgarian empires, and the Seljuk Turks; even the Ottoman Turks, who brought Byzantium down, founded an empire that was to have a much shorter life. The Byzantines were probably wise to avoid major pitched battles, especially because they lost most of the few they did fight, like the battle of Adrianople against the Goths, the battle of the Yarmuk during the initial Muslim expansion, and the battles of Manzikert and Myriocephalum against the Seljuk Turks[17].

On the other hand, the Byzantines evidently missed some opportunities to exploit the vulnerability of their enemies. For example, Byzantium would have had every chance of success if it had tried earlier than it did to recover Greece from the weak and divided tribes of the Slavs; and having Greece earlier would have strengthened the empire and made it more defensible. Around 1100 a greater effort by the Byzantines would probably have recovered not just a corner of Anatolia from the Seljuk Turks but all of it; and having all of Anatolia would have made Byzantium stronger and more defensible. For whatever reasons, however, the Byzantines ignored such chances to regain lost territory.

III

Yet the Byzantines did fight some wars of reconquest. The most spectacular look almost like highly successful offensive wars: Justinian's conquests of northwestern Africa from the Vandals, Italy and the western Balkans from the Ostrogoths, and southeastern Spain from the Visigoths. To be sure, these lands had once been part of the empire – but of the Western Roman Empire, not the Eastern Roman Empire that we conventionally call Byzantium. Moreover, some of these provinces had been lost more than a

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[17] Treadgold, *History*, 67-68 (Adrianople), 303 (Yarmuk), 603-4 (Manzikert), and 649 (Myriocephalum).

century before Justinian invaded them. So were these gains really reconquests, or just conquests made on plausible pretexts?

Justinian, who ordered them, was a native speaker of Latin, born in Illyricum (roughly the former Yugoslavia). His home town lay only some hundred miles east of the former administrative boundary between the eastern and western empires, which divided Illyricum[18]. The last Western Roman emperor, Nepos, ruled in western Illyricum until just two years before Justinian was born, and when Justin I, Justinian's uncle and adopted father, was about thirty[19]. Justin's and Justinian's Illyrian homeland had once been part of the Western Roman Empire and in their time remained under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Pope at Rome, not of the Patriarch of Constantinople. When Justinian first sent troops to reconquer western Illyricum, it had been Roman within living memory, fifty-five years before[20]. Justinian himself surely knew that many people in the West spoke his language, shared his faith, and were none too happy to be ruled by German barbarians, who were also Arian heretics.

Though Justinian's great general Belisarius was also a Latin-speaking native of Illyricum, to most Byzantines of the time the former Western Roman Empire must have seemed a faraway land speaking a foreign tongue[21]. We know that all Justinian's advisers opposed his first foray into the former Western Roman Empire, his expedition to Africa. They almost persuaded him to call it off, until an eastern bishop told him it was his duty to free the Africans from "tyrants", and some Africans actually raised a pro-Byzantine revolt[22]. Justinian's troops enjoyed considerable support from the Africans, Illyrians, Italians, and Spaniards, though in the Middle Ages active popular support for any invading army was extremely rare, and for a foreign army almost unknown[23]. But many Westerners, like Justinian himself, seem to have

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[18] See A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale and J. Morris, *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971-92), 2: Iustinianus 7.

[19] Jones, Martindale and Morris, *Prosopography,* 2: Iustinus 4.

[20] I count from the death of Nepos in Illyricum in 480 to the invasion of Illyricum by Mundus in 535.

[21] Jones, Martindale and Morris, *Prosopography,* 3: Belisarius 1.

[22] Procopius of Caesarea. *Opera Omnia,* ed. J. Haury and G. Wirth (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1962-64), *Wars* III. 10.1-23.

[23] See Procopius, *Wars* III. 10.22-24, 17.6, 20.1 and 3 (Africa); V.7.10 and 31 (Illyricum); and V.5.12 and 18, 8.1-2 and 26-28, 14.4-5, 15.3, 16.3-4, 25.11-12, VI.7.35-38 and 2: 10.5 6 (Italy). On the Romans in Cordova who were in rebellion against the Visigoths both before and during Justinian's invasion, see E. A.

regarded his campaigns not as foreign invasions, but as reconquests by their legitimate ruler[24].

The next Byzantine reconquest was Emperor Heraclius' recovery of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, which the Persians had taken and held for ten to twenty-three years. This land, most of it lost during Heraclius' own reign, was plainly reconquered in a defensive war, not conquered in an aggressive one. What is striking about the war, and belies any attempt to regard it as a sort of proto-crusade, is that Heraclius was almost certainly ready to let the Persians keep their conquests. He begged abjectly for peace at a time when the Persians had already taken Syria and Palestine, including Jerusalem, and were in the process of taking Egypt[25]. But the Persian king imprisoned Heraclius' ambassadors and let them die, invaded Anatolia, and besieged Constantinople with the help of the Avars.

Once Heraclius had reluctantly concluded that the Persian objective was to destroy his empire, he invaded Persia in a desperate attempt to save it. He was so successful that the Persians overthrew their king in 628 and sued for peace. Though the new Persian king agreed to give up Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, his agreement was meaningless, because all three provinces were

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Thompson, *The Goths in Spain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 16-17, 27-28, and 321-29, though he seems much too eager to minimize the possibility of cooperation between the rebels at Cordova and the Byzantines or the Byzantines' ally, Athanagild. Apart from the fact that all the enemies of king Agila had every incentive to cooperate, the Romans in Spain would have been at least as likely to think themselves natural Byzantine allies as the far better-documented Romans of Vandal Africa and Ostrogothic Italy and Illyricum. The Visigoths were certainly less popular than the Ostrogoths, who never suffered a spontaneous rebellion like that at Cordova.

[24] Cf. Procopius, *Wars* V.5.8-9, in which Justinian says he is fighting the Goths because they have taken "our" Italy and refused to return it.

[25] *Chronicon Paschale,* ed. L. Dindorf, Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae. (Bonn: E. Weber, 1832), 1: 705-9 (dated to indiction 4 = Sept. 1, 615-Aug. 31, 616); Theophanes, *Chronographia,* ed. Carl de Boor (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1883-85), 1: 301 (dating the peace overture after the loss of Egypt, which began in 616, and to A.M. 6109 = 616/17, which since Theophanes' years of the world are a year late for this period should be corrected to 615/16); and Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Short History,* ed. and trans. Cyril Mango, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990), 6-7 (also dating the peace overture after the loss of Egypt). Given the references to Egypt, a date in summer 616 seems most likely for the embassy. James Howard-Johnston, "Heraclius' Persian Campaigns and the Revival of the East Roman Empire, 622-630", *War in History* (1999): 3 and n. 8, dates it to "the winter of 615/16", for reasons unclear to me.

then in the hands of a rebel Persian general. Heraclius got them back later without fighting, after agreeing to back the general's rebellion against the next Persian king. Whether Heraclius would have fought to regain Syria, Palestine, and Egypt is very doubtful. He never tried to recover any of the Balkans from the Avars, though after his victory over Persia the Avar khanate was disintegrating. Heraclius' war against the Persians was very much a defensive war[26].

During the next three centuries Byzantium reconquered what little land it did either without serious fighting or as the incidental result of defensive wars. The empire regained Greece by a process more of peaceful resettlement than reconquest because the few Slavs there barely resisted[27]. The empire retook the tiny border state of the Paulician heretics only to stop their relentless raids after they refused an offer of peace[28]. The Byzantines' first gains in Armenia were voluntarily ceded to the empire by Armenian princes seeking Byzantine protection[29].

Then, after 934, came a century of increasingly dramatic expansion in the Balkans, northern Syria, Armenia, and southern Italy that nearly doubled Byzantine territory. As before, these were technically reconquests, though all had been lost long ago, usually more than two hundred years before. Most, however, are best described as defensive or retaliatory efforts that got somewhat out of hand. The Byzantines were mainly interested in stopping Muslim raiding when they conquered the neighboring Muslim emirates of Melitene, Crete, and Tarsus, all of which had served as bases for generations of Muslim raiders[30]. The Byzantines recovered a few other borderlands when some Muslims deserted to the empire and more Armenian princes ceded their lands to it[31]. Byzantium also took Edessa and Antioch – partly because both cities had large Christian populations and illustrious Christian histories, but also because both had strong city walls that helped

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[26] On the whole war, see Treadgold, *History,* 287-301, and now Walter E. Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 58-228 (though Kaegi's treatment of the Balkans is inadequate).

[27] See Warren Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival, 780-842* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 135-38 and 159-64.

[28] Treadgold, *History,* 457-58.

[29] Treadgold, *History,* 466-67.

[30] Treadgold, *History,* 481-83 (Melitene), 494-95 and 497 (Crete), and 501 (Tarsus).

[31] Treadgold, *History,* 483 (desertion of the Banu Habib) and 502 (Taron and other places in Armenia).

defend the new frontier[32]. Then still more Armenian and Georgian rulers ceded their lands to the empire, either for protection or as reparations for backing the losing side in Byzantine civil wars[33].

The Byzantines originally had no plan to conquer Bulgaria, though it had often attacked the empire and lay entirely in former Byzantine territory. The emperor, John I Tzimisces, was only defending his empire when he conquered much of Bulgaria from the Russians, who had seized it and were threatening to attack Constantinople from it[34]. The Bulgarians then exploited a Byzantine civil war to reclaim their lost land; and they would probably have gotten away with it, had they not provoked the empire by invading Greece. This began a long and bitter war with Basil II, who nonetheless offered several times to make peace if Bulgaria would give up its recent conquests and become a Byzantine client state. Three Bulgarian rulers died resisting Basil's attacks. Finally the widow of the third ruler, apparently not realizing that Basil only demanded a protectorate over Bulgaria, surrendered outright in order to stop the war[35]. Only then did Basil annex Bulgaria, almost against his will.

Some historians have seen Basil's predecessors, Nicephorus II Phocas and John I, as proto-crusaders who dreamed of extending their Syrian conquests south to retake Jerusalem. The main evidence is a report that Nicephorus asked the Byzantine Church to honor soldiers who fell in battle as "martyrs"; the Church rebuffed him, citing St. Basil's suggestion of three years' penance for killing in battle[36]. This report is clearly hostile to Nicephorus, and may well be distorted. Nicephorus can scarcely have expected that a Church that took such a negative view of warfare would give ordinary soldiers the exalted status of martyrs – that is, of saints. Quite possibly Nicephorus asked for something more modest, perhaps only remission of the sins of soldiers who died in battle, as if they had done the

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[32] Treadgold, *History,* 504-505.

[33] Treadgold, *History,* 520 and 523 (Upper Tao), and 529-30, 589, and 592 (Ani and Vaspurakan).

[34] Treadgold, *History,* 507-11.

[35] Treadgold, *History,* 514-28 passim, mentioning Basil's willingness to make peace on 522, 525, and 526-27.

[36] John Scylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum,* ed. J. Thurn, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1973), 274-75.

penance that they would then have had no time to do[37]. In any case, whatever Nicephorus wanted, the Church refused it.

Whether Nicephorus II or John I actually hoped to conquer and keep Jerusalem, just to visit it under arms and then leave it, or not to go there at all, is hard to prove[38]. We do know that between them Nicephorus and John sacked several Syrian cities that they made no attempt to keep, including Aleppo, which John made a client state when he could almost certainly have annexed it[39]. John's actual conquests in Syria corresponded closely to the parts that still had a substantial Christian population, and they may well have been all that he wanted to keep. Any further conquests would have brought with them large numbers of Muslims, whom Byzantine emperors were extremely reluctant to rule[40]. When Nicephorus II reconquered Crete and

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[37] While this sort of remission of sins was granted to soldiers if they died in a battle around 1208 by the Patriarch Michael IV Autorianus, the value of this parallel is dubious, because so soon after the Fourth Crusade in 1204 Michael was so patently influenced by the remission of sins offered to Western Crusaders, especially because many of the soldiers he was addressing were Western mercenaries; see Nicolas Oikonomides, "Cinq actes inédits du patriarche Michel Autôreianos", *Revue des Études Byzantines* 25 (1967): 113-45, esp. 117-19 and 131-45. Nicephorus II's request is discussed at length (without my skepticism) by Hans-Georg Beck, *Nomos, Kanon und Staatsraison in Byzanz* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie des Wissenschaften, 1981).

[38] See Paul E. Walker, "The 'Crusade' of John Tzimisces in the Light of New Arabic Evidence", *Byzantion* 47 (1977): 301-27, who concludes (on page 327) that "although [John's] war in 975 was in part religiously motivated, faith was more a 'public relations' excuse than the real cause which propelled the soldiers to fight. It was not the campaign itself which 'breathed the veritable crusading spirit,' but the emperor's after-the-fact letter written to put the most diplomatically valuable face on his recent achievements".

[39] Treadgold, *History,* 496 (Aleppo), 504 (Hama and Horns), and 511-12 (Nisibis, Apamea, Baalbek, and Beirut), with 507 (protectorate over Aleppo).

[40] Here I strongly disagree with Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society,* 41: "The resources necessary to extend permanently beyond north Syria were simply not available, however much the propaganda of the military magnate elite of Asia Minor, as personified by John [I] Tzimiskes and Nikeph[o]ros Phocas [Nicephorus II], hoped for a process of continued expansion leading to the recovery of the lost provinces of the east and the incorporation of all the Christian populations still under Islam into a revived Orthodox empire". In fact, the resources were abundantly available, as appears from the immense surplus left in the treasury by Basil II in 1025 (even after remitting two years' worth of land and hearth taxes) and by his army of some 250,000

Cilicia, most of their relatively few Muslim inhabitants were either converted to Christianity or expelled[41]. This was probably the main reason the Byzantines seemed to like to fight Christians more than they liked to fight Muslims. The emperors preferred to conquer Christian lands because Christians were more convenient to rule.

Around 1100, Emperor Alexius I's recovery of northwestern Anatolia in the wake of the First Crusade was obviously a reconquest, since the Turks had held the land he retook for no more than seventeen years. Yet why did Alexius stop with the coastal plains of Anatolia, when he could surely have retaken more from the weakened Turks? My own answer is that retaking inland Anatolia would have meant restoring the Anatolian estates of many great landholders who Alexius feared might try to overthrow him[42]. As we shall see in discussing civil wars, such a fear was by no means unjustified. In any event, the Byzantines regained little more until their empire fell to the Fourth Crusade in 1204. The last major Byzantine reconquest came when the Byzantine successor state at Nicaea retook much of what the Crusaders had taken, culminating in the almost bloodless recapture of Constantinople in 1261 under Michael VIII Palaeologus[43].

IV

More confirmation of the defensive inclinations of the Byzantines appears in the organization of their army. From the fourth to the sixth century, almost two-thirds of the soldiers were essentially defensive frontier troops (called *limitanei*)[44]. During a financial crisis in the mid-sixth century, the

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men, which far exceeded the empire's defensive needs; see Treadgold, *History*, 537, 548 49, and 569-79.

[41] Treadgold, *History*, 495 (Crete), 501 (Cilicia), and 535-39 (rationale for the conquests).

[42] Treadgold, *History*, 628-29 and 671-72.

[43] While no one doubts that this was a reconquest, note that Constantinople had then been in foreign hands for fifty-seven years, two years longer than western Illyricum had been when Justinian recovered it. I do not count as reconquests the restored Byzantine Empire's recovery of land from the other successor states in Epirus and Thessaly, because, both sides being "Byzantine", these are best considered as civil wars.

[44] In my *Byzantium and Its Army, 284-1081* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), 44-59, I estimate the frontier troops at about 195,500, the field troops at about 104,000, and the Scholae (guardsmen) at 3,500. This makes a total for the whole Eastern army of some 303,000 men (excluding the navy).

government ended the modest pay (though not the other perquisites) of these troops; but this was perhaps a mistake, because during the next sixty years the empire lost not only its frontier troops but nearly all its frontiers[45]. In the seventh century almost the whole empire became a frontier because all of it was open to enemy incursions. What had formerly been a field army became the essentially defensive "themes" (an Anglicization of the Greek word *themata.* The themes made up more than three-quarters of the army and were stationed all over the empire in districts also called themes, which their main purpose was to defend[46].

By the early eleventh century, when the empire became more secure, the government began to consider the themes unnecessary and let them decline and finally disband by debasing the coinage used to pay them. This too was probably a mistake, since it was followed by the temporary loss of more than half the empire and the permanent insecurity of the remainder. During the rest of Byzantine history, the government defended itself with an army composed largely of foreign mercenaries. In all three of these stages of Byzantine military organization the largest part of the army was devoted to defense – first the frontier troops, then the themes, and finally the mercenaries[47].

It remains interesting that the greatest reconquests occurred during the transitions between these stages of military organization. Justinian, the emperor who cut the pay of the frontier troops, reconquered much of the Western Roman Empire; Heraclius, probably the last important emperor before the creation of the themes, reconquered Syria and Egypt from Persia.

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[45] The government continued to issue the frontier troops rations, arms, uniforms, horses, and fodder even after eliminating their regular pay; see Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army,* 17, 59-60, 150-51, and 204.

[46] See Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army,* 66, Table 2, for figures (mostly recorded rather than estimated) putting the themes at 62,000 of the 80,000 men in the army of 773 and at 96,000 of the 124,000 men in the army of 899.

[47] Although I consider John Haldon's theory of the origin of the themes impossible on economic grounds (cf. my *Byzantium and Its Army,* 179 85), I generally agree with his summation in *Warfare, State and Society,* 38: "In the light of this strategic situation, defence was the primary concern of Byzantine rulers and generals. Byzantine military dispositions were organized and administered upon a consistent and logistically well-organized basis, and their main purpose was to secure the survival of the empire by deploying the limited resources available to the best effect." See also ibid., 60 ("The late Roman system [...] was orientated entirely towards defence") and 62 ("The new strategic system [...] was even more clearly defensively orientated").

Later, just when the system of themes was beginning to break down, Nicephorus II, John I, and Basil II reconquered northern Syria, Armenia, and Bulgaria[48].

The breakdown of the defensive systems of the *limitanei* and the themes increased the relative importance of the main mobile forces of the army, which did most of the work of the reconquests. In Justinian's time the mobile forces were the field armies, which Justinian increased by about sixty percent[49]. After the field armies were turned into the themes, later emperors developed new mobile forces, chiefly the so-called *tagmata.* Nicephorus II, John I, and Basil II together apparently increased their field forces by about fifty percent[50]. Both times the newly strengthened field forces accomplished reconquests that earlier and later emperors never attempted, probably could not have achieved, and may not even have wanted.

V

Turning now to the hardest question of all: why did the otherwise not very bellicose Byzantines fight so many civil wars? I cannot claim to have a fully satisfactory answer, which will only be found with further research. Thus far, no one has made a study of Byzantine civil wars as such in any period[51]. Two books have partly concerned themselves with civil wars: Walter Kaegi's *Byzantine Military Unrest, 471-843* and Jean-Claude Cheynet's *Power and Conflicts at Byzantium, 963-1210.* Yet both studies cover not just civil wars but protests and conspiracies that never actually led to fighting. Moreover, neither book directly discusses why the Byzantines,

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[48] For the suggestion that Nicephorus II was the first emperor to reduce the wages of the less useful themes by paying them in coins of lighter weight (called *tetartera*) see Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army,* 139-40.

[49] Justinian added the field armies of Armenia, Italy, Africa, and Spain, which the estimates in Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, 59-63, put at a total of 55,000 men, with the five previously existing field armies totaling 95,000 men at the beginning of Justinian's reign.

[50] Before Nicephorus II these field forces were the *tagmata,* which totaled 28,000, and to these Nicephorus probably added 4,000 new Scholae and Excubitors, John the 4,000-man Immortals, and Basil the 6,000-man Varangians, for a total of 14,000; cf. Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army,* 67 (Table 2) and 78-79.

[51] The *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) has an article on the Civil War of 1341-47, but not on civil war as such.

usually so reluctant to engage in aggressive warfare against others, were much less reluctant to engage in aggressive warfare among themselves[52].

I suggest as a working definition of a Byzantine civil war "an armed conflict in which a significant number of Byzantine soldiers fought on both sides with a significant number of casualties". This definition excludes plots in which only the emperor and a few of his retainers were killed, which are better described as coups than as civil wars. The definition includes, along with wars over who would be emperor, a few wars over who would dominate a figurehead emperor. I would also include wars in the fourth and fifth centuries between the Eastern and Western Roman empires and wars after the Fourth Crusade between Byzantine successor states. These successor states – primarily the empires of Nicaea, Thessalonica, and Trebizond – showed a preference for fighting each other instead of their Crusader enemies that seems related to the earlier Byzantines' preference for civil wars instead of foreign wars.

Using this definition, I have compiled a preliminary list of Byzantine civil wars. Many of these ended in a single battle, though that battle could be very bloody. Most of the wars were over within a year, and some of the longer ones never spread beyond limited regions. Since a few cases are debatable for one reason or another, other scholars may arrive at a number slightly higher or lower than mine. I have counted 120 civil wars, about one every ten years. This seems rather a lot, especially because the rebels faced long odds. Just 23 of these wars, fewer than one in five, actually succeeded in deposing or dominating an emperor[53].

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[52] Walter Kaegi, *Byzantine Military Unrest, 471-843: An Interpretation* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1981); Jean-Claude Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1990). While neither of these books is a study of civil war as such, their approaches are very different. Kaegi's book seems to me to treat dissimilar phenomena with much too little regard for their differences or their broader social and economic context, and as a result comes to only the most obvious conclusions (e.g., that troops were more likely to rebel if they had not been paid). Cheynet's book defines its subject coherently, considers social and economic factors, and consequently considerably illuminates the background of this period of civil wars; though I would argue that the period of civil wars extended past 1210, Cheynet's terminal date is still a reasonable one, since the Fourth Crusade changed the situation in important ways.

[53] See the Appendix, where rebels who succeeded in deposing or dominating an emperor by civil wars are marked with an asterisk. While a few of these rebels may have intended no more than to rule in limited regions, almost all of them declared themselves emperor; only two, Alexius I of Trebizond and Leo Gabalas of Rhodes,

The distribution of the civil wars over time is uneven. Before Justinian, civil wars were somewhat less common than average, about one every fourteen years. Because the three earliest civil wars were fought among pagans, they would not have concerned St. Basil, whose strictures were meant for Christians. Most of the other civil wars were related to a religious cause that St. Basil might have considered more or less righteous and pious. In four wars Christians fought pagans; in seven more, orthodox Christians fought those they considered heretics (and the heretics would of course have seen it the other way around). That leaves only three civil wars without an obvious religious motive[54]. Even in those, no doubt the government would have claimed that it was defending itself against an unjustified revolt, while the rebels would have claimed that their revolt was justified; but that is true of almost every civil war, and would probably not have impressed St. Basil.

Under Justinian's dynasty there were just three civil wars, one every twenty-eight years, and all three began as army mutinies. My explanation is that just before Justinian the field soldiers' pay had been raised by two-thirds, a sum the government could barely afford; as a result, the soldiers were usually too contented to rebel, but they were ready to mutiny when the government either failed to pay them or, worse still, tried to reduce their compensation permanently. Several mutinies, including two that turned into civil wars, ended when the mutinous troops were paid. The third mutiny, in 602, murdered Emperor Maurice when he made his third attempt to economize on the army[55]. Though these mutinies may be explicable, St. Basil would presumably not have found them justifiable.

In the two and a half centuries after Maurice's murder there were twenty-two civil wars, about one every eleven years, near the Byzantine average. Though a few of these had some vague connection with a religious cause, most recent scholars (myself included) tend to regard these causes as pretexts, if not fictions. Probably much more important was the fact that during most of this time military pay was very low, about a third of what it had been in the sixth century, and scarcely a living wage. I believe (though the point remains controversial) that the soldiers chiefly depended on land

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actually managed to establish a viable regional state by means of civil war, both by taking advantage of the unique circumstances of 1204 (Gabalas was eventually subdued by John III from Nicaea). Note that of the 23 successful civil wars, three deposed an emperor who later regained his throne (Justinian II once and John V twice).

[54] Here and later, see the relevant annotations to the entries in the Appendix.

[55] See Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, 16, 19, 147-48, and 203-6.

grants in the themes. Because these land grants made the soldiers financially independent of the central government, they were often ready to join revolts led by ambitious commanders of their themes. Most civil wars of the period were of this type[56]. St. Basil would surely have disapproved.

The next two centuries saw many fewer civil wars: only seven, roughly one every twenty-nine years, much as in the age of Justinian. Like the age of Justinian, this seems to have been a time of relatively high military pay. Around 840 the government almost doubled the soldiers' wages, and since they kept their land grants they must have been even better off than soldiers under Justinian. The themes promptly ceased to rebel[57]. But five of the seven civil wars involved ambitious generals who were great landholders, including the future emperor Nicephorus II and his nephew and grandnephew. Though St. Basil would have liked the decrease in civil wars, he would hardly have considered the ambitions of landed magnates a just cause for warfare[58].

Next, from 1039 to 1391, came the great age of Byzantine civil warfare: seventy-one civil wars, one every five years, about sixty percent of the total in just thirty percent of the Byzantine period. Most of these were simply naked grabs for power by aristocratic generals. Since the army was fairly small, divided, and discontented, soldiers could usually be found to back a revolt. Civil warfare got worse as foreign enemies closed in, the army became even unhappier, and the civil wars in turn made it harder to resist the foreign enemies. In the twenty-three years before the Fourth Crusade took Constantinople in 1204, there were twenty-three civil wars, averaging one a year. St. Basil would have been horrified. Though in the last seventy years of Byzantine history the civil wars ceased, by then the Byzantines had hardly anything left to fight over, since the empire consisted of little more than Constantinople.

How should we explain this combination of reluctant and defensive foreign warfare and frequent, though erratic, civil war? I have two explanations to offer, one practical and the other theological. The practical explanation is that the advantages of seizing internal power were greater than those of conquering external enemies. Imperial power was nearly absolute and brought many benefits for the emperor and his supporters. If you were already emperor, you needed to defend the empire against enemy attack, because conspicuous enemy victories would make you look weak and vulnerable, encouraging some rebel to depose you. But an emperor had few

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[56] Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army,* 21-25, 141-44, and 171-86.
[57] Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army,* 119-44.
[58] On such aristocratic ambitions, see Cheynet, *Pouvoir et Contestations.*

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incentives to attempt major reconquests. If you lost you were disgraced, and somebody might depose you; if you won, you gained relatively little in power, wealth, or even prestige[59]. None of the great Byzantine reconquerers was truly popular. Justinian was widely detested. Nicephorus II was murdered. John I was probably poisoned. Basil II faced a large-scale revolt three years after he finished conquering Bulgaria. Michael VIII's own son buried him in unconsecrated ground[60]. Civil wars might make you emperor; defensive wars defended your throne; but offensive wars offered few rewards from the emperor's point of view[61].

My theological explanation for the Byzantine preference for civil war is rather similar to this. The Byzantines considered their emperors to be chosen by God, but only in the sense that whoever was emperor was God's choice until God removed him[62]. Becoming emperor, even by the most dastardly means, was taken as a sign of divine approval. When John I became emperor by murdering Nicephorus II, the patriarch forced John to do penance, which included giving the Church the property he had held as a private citizen and executing two of his co-conspirators; but then the patriarch promptly readmitted John to communion and crowned him. This was the same patriarch who had recently reminded Nicephorus that St. Basil advised three years' penance for soldiers who killed in battle[63]. In the Byzantines' opinion, not even victory quite justified a foreign war, even if it was a war of reconquest. Yet victory did in effect justify a civil war, because it meant God had withdrawn his favor from the deposed emperor and chosen the rebel instead. By the same token, an emperor could scarcely avoid fighting defensive foreign wars, since being defeated by foreigners would imply God no longer entirely approved of him. The Byzantines were in fact most likely to rebel

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[59] This consideration incidentally helps to explain why relatively few Byzantine emperors, even those who had been military men before becoming emperor, led campaigns against foreigners after becoming emperor.

[60] See Treadgold, *History,* 181-82 and 218-19 (Justinian), 502-3 and 505 (Nicephorus II), 508 and 512 (John I), 530 (Basil II), and 737, 738-39, 741-42, 745, and 746 (Michael VIII).

[61] Cf. Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society,* 36: "Wars were costly, and for a state whose basic income derived from agricultural production, and which remained relatively stable as well as being vulnerable to both natural and man-made disasters, they were to be avoided if at all possible."

[62] See, for example, Louis Bréhier, *Les institutions de l'empire byzantin* (Paris: A. Michel, 1949), 1-88.

[63] Treadgold, *History,* 505-6 (Polyeuctus' penance for John I) and 499 (the reminder to Nicephorus II).

against their emperors when foreigners were defeating them – the very times when most modern observers would say the empire could least afford civil warfare.

Under no circumstances did the Byzantines think that war was good in itself. Most Byzantines preferred to fight only when it was necessary to defend their empire. Exceptionally, however, some emperors risked wars of reconquest when the empire was strong, and some adventurers risked civil wars when the empire was weak. Yet of these two types of war – wars of reconquest and civil wars – civil wars offered the Byzantines greater rewards, whether material or spiritual. This may well be the reason Byzantine civil wars were more common than Byzantine wars of reconquest.

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APPENDIX
LIST OF BYZANTINE CIVIL WARS

Note: Rebels who succeeded in deposing an established emperor by means of the civil war are marked with an asterisk (*). References are to Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Treadgold, *History),* A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale and J. Morris, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (Jones et al., *Prosopography),* Jean-Claude Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance,* and William Miller, *Trebizond: The Last Greek Empire.*

296-97	Domitian/Egyptians vs. Diocletian (Treadgold, *History,* 23 and Jones et al., *Prosopography* 1, Domitianus 6; pagan vs. pagan)
307	Galerius vs. Maxentius/Western Empire (Treadgold, *History,* 29; pagan vs. pagan)
313	Maximian vs. Licinius (Treadgold, *History,* 33; pagan vs. pagan)
316-17	Constantine I/Western Empire vs. Licinius (Treadgold, *History,* 34; Christian vs. pagan)
324	Constantine I*/Western Empire vs. Licinius (Treadgold, *History,* 36; Christian vs. pagan)
350-53	Constantius II vs. Magnentius/Western Empire (Treadgold, *History,* 55-56; Arian vs. orthodox)
365-66	Procopius vs. Valens (Treadgold, *History,* 64-65; pagan vs. Christian)
387-88	Theodosius I vs. Maximus/Western Empire (Treadgold, *History,* 74)
392-94	Theodosius I vs. Eugenius/Western Empire (Treadgold, *History,* 75; orthodox supported by Arian Germans vs. pro-pagan)
399-400	Gaïnas/Goths vs. various ministers to dominate Arcadius (Treadgold, *History,* 83-85; Arian German vs. orthodox)

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423-25	Theodosius II vs. John/Western Empire (Treadgold, *History,* 91; Arian barbarians on both sides)
471	Aspar's Goths vs. Leo I (Treadgold, *History,* 155; Arians vs. orthodox)
475-76	Basiliscus vs. Zeno (Treadgold, *History,* 157; Monophysite vs. orthodox)
479	Marcian vs. Zeno (Treadgold, *History,* 159)
484-88	Leontius vs. Zeno (Treadgold, *History,* 161-64; orthodox vs. compromiser)
491-98	Longinus/Isaurians vs. Anastasius I (Treadgold, *History,* 165-66; orthodox vs. crypto-Monophysite)
513-18	Vitalian/Army of Thrace vs. Anastasius I (Treadgold, *History,* 171-72; orthodox vs. crypto-Monophysite)

Total for 285-518 (233 years): 17 civil wars (1 every 13.7 years)

536-37	Stotzas/Army of Africa supported by Arian barbarians vs. Justinian I (Treadgold, *History,* 188-89; cf. Jones et al., *Prosopography* 3, Stotzas; mutiny)
545-46	Stotzas and John/Army of Africa supported by Arian barbarians vs. Justinian I (Treadgold, *History,* 202; cf. Jones et al., *Prosopography* 3, Stotzas and Ioannes 35; mutiny)
602	Phocas* vs. Maurice (Treadgold, *History,* 235; mutiny)
602-5	Narses supported by Persians/Army of the East vs. Phocas (Treadgold, *History*, 236-38)
608-10	Heraclius*/Army of Africa vs. Phocas (Treadgold, *History*, 239-41)
644	Valentine vs. Constans II (Treadgold, *History,* 310)
648	Gregory/Army of Africa vs. Constans II (Treadgold, *History*, 312; orthodox vs. compromiser)
650-51	Olympius/Army of Italy vs. Constans II (Treadgold, *History*, 313; orthodox vs. compromiser)
668	Saborius/Armeniac Theme supported by Muslims vs. Constans II (Treadgold, *History,* 320)
668	Mizizius/Opsician Theme vs. Constans II and Constantine IV (Treadgold, *History,* 321-22, 323-24)
698	Tiberius III*/Carabisian Theme vs. Leontius (Treadgold, *History,* 338)
705	Justinian II* supported by pagan Bulgars vs. Tiberius III (Treadgold, *History,* 340)

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711	Philippicus*/fleet (Carabisian Theme?) vs. Justinian II (Treadgold, *History,* 342; Monothelete vs. orthodox)
715	Theodosius III*/Opsician Theme vs. Anastasius II (Treadgold, *History,* 344-45)
716-17	Leo III*/Anatolic Theme vs. Theodosius III (Treadgold, *History,* 345)
718	Theme of Sicily vs. Leo III (Treadgold, *History,* 347-48)
719	Anastasius II supported by pagan Bulgars vs. Leo III (Treadgold, *History,* 349)
727	Cosmas/Theme of Hellas and Carabisian Theme vs. Leo III (Treadgold, *History,* 352; orthodox vs. iconoclast)
741-43	Artavasdus/Opsician Theme (appeal for Muslim support failed) vs. Constantine V (Treadgold, *History,* 356-58; compromiser vs. iconoclast)
781	Theme of Sicily vs. Constantine VI (Treadgold, *History,* 418)
792-93	Armeniac Theme vs. Constantine VI (Treadgold, *History,* 422)
803	Bardanes Turcus/Thracesian, Anatolic, Opsician, and Bucellarian themes vs. Nicephorus I (Treadgold, *History,* 425)
813	Leo V*/Anatolic Theme vs. Michael I Rhangabe (Treadgold, *History,* 431)
821-24	Thomas the Slav/Bucellarian, Paphlagonian, and Cibyrrhaeot themes supported by Muslims vs. Michael II (Treadgold, *History,* 434-35; compromiser vs. moderate iconoclast)
838-39	Theophobus/Persian Turmae vs. Theophilus (Treadgold, *History,* 441-42)

Total for 602-839 (237 years): 22 civil wars (1 every 10.8 years)

932	Basil the Copper Hand vs. Romanus I (Treadgold, *History,* 481)
963	Nicephorus II* vs. Joseph Bringas to dominate Basil II (Treadgold, *History*, 498-99)
970	Bardas Phocas vs. John I (Treadgold, *History,* 508)
976-79	Bardas Sclerus supported by Muslims vs. Basil II (Treadgold, *History,* 513-16)

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986-89	Bardas Sclerus and Bardas Phocas supported by Muslims vs. Basil II supported by Russians (Treadgold, *History*, 517-19)
1018-19	Meles/Theme of Longobardia vs. Basil II (Treadgold, *History*, 527 and 528)
1022	Nicephorus Phocas and Nicephorus Xiphias supported by Armenians and Georgians vs. Basil II (Treadgold, *History*, 530)

Total for 839-1039 (200 years): 7 civil wars (1 every 28.6 years)

1039-41	Peter Delyan and Alusian/Bulgarians vs. Michael IV (Treadgold, *History*, 588 89)
1042-43	George Maniaces vs. Constantine IX (Treadgold, *History*, 592)
1047	Leo Tornices vs. Constantine IX (Treadgold, *History*, 594)
1057	Isaac I* vs. Michael VI (Treadgold, *History*, 597-98)
1071-72	Romanus IV vs. Michael VII (Treadgold, *History*, 603-4)
1072-78	Philaretus Brachamius vs. Michael VII (Treadgold, *History*, 604-56, 607-10)
1072-73	Bulgarians vs. Michael VII (Treadgold, *History*, 604)
1073	John Ducas supported by Normans vs. Michael VII (Treadgold, *History*, 606)
1076-?	Nestor supported by Pechenegs vs. Michael VII (Treadgold, *History*, 607)
1077-78	Nicephorus III* vs. Michael VII (Treadgold, *History*, 607)
1077-78	Nicephorus Bryennius vs. Michael VII and Nicephorus III (Treadgold, *History*, 607-10)
1078	Nicephorus Basiliacus vs. Nicephorus III with Turks (Treadgold, *History*, 610)
1079	Constantius Ducas vs. Nicephorus III (Treadgold, *History*, 610)
1080-81	Nicephorus Melissenus vs. Nicephorus III and Alexius I (Treadgold, *History*, 610-11, 613)
1081	Alexius I* vs. Nicephorus III (Treadgold, *History*, 610-11)
1110	Michael of Amastris vs. Alexius I (Treadgold, *History*, 627)
1126-41	Constantine Gabras supported by Turks vs. John II (Treadgold, *History*, 630-31, 634)
1126-30	Cassianus supported by Turks vs. John II (Treadgold, *History*, 630-31)
1181-82	Andronicus I* vs. Alexius II (Treadgold, *History*, 651-52)

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1183-83	Theodore Angelus and Isaac II vs. Andronicus I (Treadgold, *History,* 653-54)
c. 1185-91	Isaac Comnenus vs. Andronicus I and Isaac II (Treadgold, *History,* 654, 657, and 658)
1187	Alexius Branas vs. Isaac II (Treadgold. *History,* 657)
1188-92	Theodore Mangaphas supported by Turks vs. Isaac II (Treadgold, *History,* 658, 659)
1191	Pseudo-Alexius II supported by Turks vs. Isaac II (Treadgold, *History,* 658)
1191	Pseudo-Alexius II vs. Isaac II (Treadgold, *History,* 658-59)
1191?	Basil Chotzas vs. Isaac II (Treadgold, *History,* 658-59 and Cheynet, *Pouvoir,* 125 no. 171)
1193	Constantine Angelus vs. Isaac II (Treadgold, *History,* 659)
1194-96?	Pseudo-Alexius II vs. Alexius III (Treadgold, *History,* 659-61)
1196-97	Chrysus vs. Alexius III (Treadgold, *History,* 661)
1199-1200	Alexius-Ivanko vs. Alexius III (Treadgold, *History,* 661-62)
1200-3	Michael Ducas supported by Turks vs. Alexius III (Treadgold, *History,* 662, 712)
1200-4	Theodore Mangaphas vs. Alexius III and Alexius IV (Treadgold, *History,* 662, 710)
1200-2	Manuel Camytzes supported by Bulgarians vs. Alexius III (Treadgold, *History,* 662, 663-64)
1200-2	Chrysus vs. Alexius III (Treadgold, *History,* 662, 663-64)
1200-4	Leo Sgurus vs. Alexius III and Alexius IV (Treadgold, *History,* 662, 710)
1203-4	Alexius IV* supported by Crusaders vs. Alexius III (Treadgold, *History,* 664-65)
1204	Leo Gabalas vs. Alexius IV (Treadgold, *History,* 710)
1204	Sabas Asidenus vs. Alexius IV (Treadgold, *History,* 710)
1204	Manuel Maurozomes vs. Alexius IV (Treadgold, *History,* 710)
1204	Theodore Lascaris vs. Alexius IV (Treadgold, *History,* 710)
1204	Alexius I of Trebizond supported by Georgians vs. Alexius IV (Treadgold, *History,* 710)
1205	Theodore I vs. Theodore Mangaphas (Treadgold, *History,* 713)
1205-14	Theodore I vs. David Comnenus (Treadgold, *History,* 713-14, 715, 718)
1205	Theodore I vs. Sabas Asidenus (Treadgold, *History,* 714)

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1205-6	Theodore I vs. Manuel Maurozomes (Treadgold, *History,* 714)
1210-11	Alexius III supported by Turks vs. Theodore I (Treadgold, *History*, 717)
1221-24	John III vs. Lascaris brothers (Treadgold, *History,* 719)
1233-34	John III vs. Leo Gabalas (Treadgold, *History,* 723-24)
1237	Theodore Ducas vs. Manuel Ducas (Treadgold, *History,* 724)
1242	John III vs. John Ducas (Treadgold, *History,* 725)
1251-52	Michael II Ducas of Epirus vs. John III (Treadgold, *History*, 728-29)
1257-63	Michael II Ducas supported by Serbs, Germans, and Latins vs. Theodore II, John IV, and Michael VIII (Treadgold, *History*, 731-33, 735-38)
1262	Michael VIII vs. Pseudo-John IV (Treadgold, *History,* 737)
1264	Michael II Ducas vs. Michael VIII (Treadgold, *History,* 738)
1267	John Ducas vs. Michael VIII (Treadgold, *History,* 740)
1272-88	John Ducas vs. Michael VIII and Andronicus II (Treadgold, *History,* 740, 745, 746, 747)
1278-84	Michael VIII and Andronicus II vs. Nicephorus Ducas (Treadgold, *History,* 742, 746)
1327-28	Andronicus III* supported by Bulgarians vs. Andronicus II supported by Serbs (Treadgold, *History,* 758-59)
1340	Irene of Trebizond vs. Sebastus Tzanichites (Treadgold, *History,* 810 and Miller, *Trebizond,* 47-48)
1341-47	John VI* supported by Serbs and Turks vs. various others supported by Bulgarians and Venetians to dominate John V (Treadgold, *History,* 766-71)
1341	Anna of Trebizond vs. Michael of Trebizond (Treadgold, *History,* 810 and Miller, *Trebizond,* 50-51)
1342	Anna of Trebizond vs. John III of Trebizond* (Treadgold, *History,* 810 and Miller, *Trebizond,* 51-52)
1351	Alexius III of Trebizond vs. Theodore Doranites (Treadgold, *History*, 810 and Miller, *Trebizond,* 56-57)
1352-54	John V* supported by Bulgarians, Serbs, and Venetians vs. John VI supported by Turks (Treadgold, *History,* 775-76)
1355	Alexius III of Trebizond vs. Nicetas (Treadgold, *History,* 810 and Miller, *Trebizond*, 58~59)
1356	Matthew Cantacuzenus vs. John V (Treadgold, *History,* 778)
1373	Andronicus IV supported by Turks vs. John V supported by Turks (Treadgold, *History,* 780)

1376	Andronicus IV* supported by Genoese and Turks vs. John V (Treadgold, *History,* 780)
1379	John V* supported by Venetians and Turks vs. Andronicus IV (Treadgold, *History,* 781)
1390	John VII* supported by Turks vs. John V (Treadgold, *History,* 782)
1390	John V* vs. John VII (Treadgold, *History,* 782)

Total for 1039-1391 (352 years): 71 civil wars (1 every 5.0 years)

Total for 1391-1461 (70 years): 0 civil wars

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THE FORMATION OF A BYZANTINE IDENTITY*

I

Although I believe the formation of a Byzantine identity was something that really happened, the Byzantines themselves would admittedly have found such a concept hard to grasp. Their problem would have begun with the "Byzantine" part, because they called themselves not "Byzantines" but "Romans" (*Roméi*)[1]. For them, "Byzantines" (*Vizantíni*) meant either the inhabitants of the ancient city of Byzantium or, in classicizing Greek, the inhabitants of Constantinople. (Classicizing Greek often substituted classical equivalents for postclassical names; thus Slavs were called "Scythians", since in ancient times Scythians had lived where the Slavs later settled, and Constantinople was called "Byzantium", because ancient Byzantium had been on the site of Constantinople.) But by itself our calling the *Roméi* "Byzantines" is hardly more problematic than our calling the *Deutsch* "Germans" or the *Éllines* "Greeks."

The real problem in explaining to the Byzantines what my subject here is would have been making them understand what we moderns mean by an "identity." The Byzantines had no word with that connotation, and the concept itself would have been unfamiliar to them. As far as we can tell, they were seldom troubled by the question of who, or what, they were. Even when, for example, they argued about who was orthodox and who was a heretic,

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* The text of this paper remains much as I originally delivered it. Since it was conceived as an interpretive essay rather than a survey of primary sources or secondary literature, I have kept my references to a minimum, partly by citing some of my own earlier reinterpretations of Byzantine history that I develop further here. Fuller references and historical background can be found in Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997). I would like to thank Anthony Kaldellis for sending me an advance draft of the second chapter of his book, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), which takes an approach to the subject broadly compatible with mine and provided me with some useful references.

[1] Here and later I follow Byzantine Greek pronunciation, which was essentially the same as in Modern Greek. Very few Byzantines thought of themselves as "Greeks" (*Éllines*) even in a geographical sense (as inhabitants of the Greek peninsula) or a religious sense (as pagans), and even those few would have thought of themselves as Romans as well.

practically all Byzantines knew what they believed and were sure that it was Orthodox – and that anything significantly different was heretical.

Yet the fact that the Byzantines did not think of themselves as having an identity does not necessarily mean that they did not have one, or at least that they did not have what we would call an identity. After all, the Byzantines did not think of themselves as having a life expectancy, or a money supply, or a blood type; but in our terms they did have all of those things. The absence of Byzantine concepts of life expectancy, money supply, or blood type is a problem for those of us who want to study such things today, because we have no direct evidence for them in Byzantine sources and must try to deduce them from indirect evidence. Similarly, we cannot expect to find Byzantine writers discussing a Byzantine identity, which we must also deduce from indirect evidence.

It might possibly be argued that, unlike a blood type, which you can have without knowing what it is, you cannot really have an identity unless you are aware of having one. To take an extreme case, an isolated group of people who were unaware of the existence of other people elsewhere would presumably lack a sense of group identity, except as human beings. And perhaps some Byzantines in isolated parts of the interior of the empire, having never met anyone who was not Byzantine, had little sense of their identity as Byzantines. Yet this was surely not true of most Byzantines, who often met foreign travelers, merchants, invaders, and raiders. Since educated Byzantines had a sense of both history and geography, I think that, if I were supplied with a time machine, I could explain my subject to any intelligent Byzantine scholar – for example, Photius, the ninth-century polymath and Patriarch of Constantinople[2].

Here is what I might say to Photius, translating from the Byzantine Greek I would use. "You, O Photius, call yourself a Roman. Like others who call themselves Romans in your time, you are a Christian, a speaker of Greek, and a subject of the emperor; you are also a native of the New Rome – that is, Constantinople. Nine centuries ago, however, the orator Cicero also called himself a Roman, and you would agree that he was right to do so. Yet Cicero was a pagan, spoke Latin, and had no emperor; he lived in the 'older Rome,' as you would call it, the city in Italy, before it had emperors. Now suppose that in your time you met someone from that older Rome, who spoke Latin

[2] Photius, born around 813, was Patriarch of Constantinople from 858 to 867 and again from 877 to 886, but his reputation as a scholar dated from before his patriarchate; see most recently, Warren Treadgold, "Photius Before His Patriarchate", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 53 (2002): 1-17.

and was not a subject of the emperor. Such a man might even be a pagan – that is, a magician who invoked the ancient gods. You might call such a man a 'Roman,' meaning that he was a native of the older Rome; but he would not be a Roman in the same way that you, Photius, are a Roman. The question I am trying to address is how the meaning of the word 'Roman' changed, so that it came to mean a Christian subject of the emperor who spoke Greek".

I think if I explained my subject to Photius in these terms he would have understood what I meant. I am much less sure he would have considered the subject of much interest. I suspect he would have answered something like this: "Of course, O barbarian, the Roman Empire has changed over the years. Once it was ruled by consuls and a senate, its capital was the older Rome, and its people spoke Latin and were pagans. Later it came to be ruled by emperors, its capital became the New Rome, its people became Christians, and most of them came to speak Greek and not Latin. In Cicero's time none of these changes had yet happened – except that many Romans knew Greek, including Cicero. Today, however, these changes are practically complete. Any educated man knows the details: the foundation of Constantinople, the disappearance of paganism, the loss of the Latin-speaking provinces to the barbarians, and so on. Because the Roman Empire has changed, the Romans have changed; but they are still rightly called Romans. That is obvious, and not very interesting".

So Photius might have said. Yet I think he would not quite have grasped the full significance of the question, and I think many modern scholars have not either. Besides language, religion, government, and geography, there were some subtle but important differences between the Roman Empire as late as the sixth century and the Byzantine Empire of the ninth century and later. These differences seem to me to have arisen during the seventh and eighth centuries, and to have given rise to what we may reasonably call a "Byzantine identity". They also tell us some important things about the way the Byzantines thought about themselves.

II

We may start with the Roman Empire roughly between the years 300 and 600, a period now often called "Late Antiquity". By the year 300 all the changes I have mentioned so far had begun, but only one of them was complete: the transition to the rule of emperors. Christianity was spreading throughout the period, but it was still a minority religion until around 400,

and it only reduced paganism to insignificance in the late sixth century[3]. Around 300, more of the empire's people spoke Latin than spoke Greek; only in the fifth century, with the fall of the mostly Latin-speaking Western Roman Empire, did Greek pull ahead of Latin; and after Justinian's recovery of Dalmatia, northwestern Africa, Italy, and southeastern Spain in the sixth century, a large minority again spoke Latin. Around 600 the Greek-speakers were still only a minority of the empire's people – perhaps about a third[4]. Besides the Latin speakers of the Western provinces, most people in Egypt spoke Coptic, most people in Syria and Palestine spoke Syriac, and many people in other parts of the empire spoke Armenian, Illyrian, and several other languages.

What did it mean to be a "Roman" in Late Antiquity? The easy answer, and on the whole the correct answer, is that being a Roman meant being a subject of the Roman emperor, or of one of the Roman emperors if the empire had more than one, as often it did. The opposite of a Roman was a barbarian, which really just meant a non-Roman; the word had largely lost its original meaning of someone who spoke an unintelligible language that sounded like "barbar". The word "barbarian" often had a pejorative connotation, but not always. For example, educated Romans knew that educated Persians, who counted as barbarians because they were not Romans, were much more cultured than uneducated Romans were[5].

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[3] Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire: (A.D. 100–400)* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 1-7, rightly stresses the difficulty of drawing the line between Christian and pagan, but arrives at the tentative conclusion that "the empire overall appears to have been predominantly non-Christian in A.D. 400" (83). This conclusion however applies to the whole empire, including the much less Christianized West. I would guess that the East was approximately half Christian by 400.

[4] Cyril Mango, *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), 13-24, surveys the empire as it was under Justinian and concludes that "the native Greek speakers represented less than a third of the total population ..." (23). By 600, with the loss of much of Italy, I would put the proportion slightly higher, around a third.

[5] For a recent discussion, with references to earlier bibliography, see Evangelos Chrysos, "Romans and Foreigners", in *Fifty Years of Prosopography: The Later Roman Empire, Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. Averil Cameron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 119-136. Geoffrey Greatrex, "Roman Identity in the Sixth Century", in *Ethnicity and Culture in Late Antiquity*, ed. Stephen Mitchell and Geoffrey Greatrex (London: Duckworth and The Classical Press of Wales, 2000), 267-292, rightly emphasizes the flexible nature of Roman identity; but in my opinion

Sometimes particularly snobbish Romans would apply the word "barbarian", with its pejorative connotation, to people in especially backward parts of the Roman Empire like the Illyrians of the central Balkans or the Isaurians of southeastern Anatolia. Yet even Roman snobs would have admitted that Isaurians or Illyrians were Romans in the technical sense that they were subjects of the Roman emperor[6]. Germans, Alans, and others from outside the empire, who served as soldiers under Roman command, formed a more ambiguous group, especially because many of them served in their own allied contingents and were not part of the regular Roman army. Sometimes their loyalty to the emperor was suspect, though that could also be true of native Roman soldiers and officers; and some soldiers and officers of German stock were educated and assimilated, often born on Roman soil of Roman mothers. Most Romans would have said that some of the empire's soldiers were Romans and some were barbarians, but would probably have disagreed about where to draw the line[7].

All of this goes to show that throughout Late Antiquity, as in the earlier Roman Empire, what we would call a Roman "identity" was fluid and not very exclusive. In the year 212 the emperor Caracalla had extended Roman citizenship to all his free subjects. Language and religion were irrelevant to this grant of citizenship. Even slaves, if they belonged to Roman masters, could be considered Romans, though they lacked the rights of citizens. After 212, all you needed to do to be a Roman in legal terms was to

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he overdoes his insistence on "loyalty to the emperor" as a criterion, because most contemporaries considered any subject of the emperor to be a Roman, even one who was indifferent to the emperor or in rebellion.

[6] On the Isaurians, see John Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London: Duckworth, 1989), 355-367; and Hugh Elton, "The Nature of the Sixth-Century Isaurians", in *Ethnicity and Culture in Late Antiquity*, ed. Stephen Mitchell and Geoffrey Greatrex (London: Duckworth and The Classical Press of Wales, 2000), 293-307.

[7] For example, Procopius, *Procopii Caesariensis Opera Omnia*, vol. 3: *Historia quae dicitur arcana*, no. 1, ed. Jakob Haury and Gerhard Wirth, Bibliotheca scriptorium Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2001), 23.24 (hereafter cited as "*Secret History*") refers to Justinian's billeting 70,000 "barbarians" in (and presumably around) Constantinople, by which he apparently means all the soldiers of the two armies "in the emperor's presence" and the oarsmen of the central fleet. To say that these were all "barbarians" is an absurd exaggeration, like much else in the *Secret History*, but does indicate that a substantial number of these men could be loosely characterized as such.

be born on Roman territory, or to settle in Roman territory, or to go on living in non-Roman territory after the Romans had conquered it.

Although the great age of Roman expansion had ended with Trajan, the Romans still did conquer certain territories during Late Antiquity. In the late third century they conquered part of Mesopotamia from the Persian Empire and gained a protectorate over Armenia, though they lost most of both of these during the fourth century. During the fifth century the Romans also lost part of the Balkans for some years to the Huns and Goths, but the Romans eventually took it back. In the sixth century, under Justinian, they conquered the Crimea, northwestern Africa, Dalmatia, Italy, and southeastern Spain; later in the sixth century they annexed Armenia again. To be sure, almost all these territories had been Roman at some time in the past; but so had almost all the land along the empire's borders that was worth conquering.

Also in Late Antiquity, Roman missionaries made many converts to Christianity, both among their fellow Romans and among peoples outside the empire's boundaries. The great success of the Church in Christianizing the Roman world between the fourth and sixth centuries is undeniable, though it has sometimes been minimized because of a persistent feeling that the conversion of Constantine assured the triumph of Christianity. Yet, at the death of Constantine, Christians were still quite a small minority in the empire, and much Christianizing needed to be done before Christians became a majority, let alone before paganism became extinct. Although recent scholarship has tended to emphasize the persecution of pagans by Christians, and most pagan temples were eventually closed or destroyed, there can be no doubt that nearly all the actual conversions were voluntary. No Christian emperors ever ordered pagans to practice Christianity, as several pagan emperors had ordered Christians to practice paganism on pain of death[8].

While some modern scholars have suggested that to be entirely Roman one needed to be a Christian even in Late Antiquity, the sources strongly indicate the contrary. One scholar who implies that "the terms 'Christian' and 'Roman' (Byzantine) are synonymous at Byzantium" as early as the fifth century also cites Priscus, a fifth-century Byzantine ambassador to the Huns, who claimed he had defended the advantages of being Roman to a disillusioned Roman refugee at the court of Attila[9]. Yet the majority opinion, which I share, is that Priscus, this professed defender of Romanism,

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[8] The most recent study is Frank R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization, c. 370-529*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Brill, 2001), 2 vols.

[9] Chrysos, "Romans", 130 (on Christianity and Roman identity) and 135 (on Priscus).

was a pagan, like several other Roman ambassadors and government officials of the fifth century[10]. By the sixth century, some pagan philosophers, forbidden to teach by Justinian because of their religion, thought they might feel more at home in the Persian Empire; but once they got there they realized their mistake, and were glad to return to Roman territory[11]. Though naturally Christian Romans wanted to convert pagan Romans, no one would have denied that pagan Romans were Romans, even after they had become a small minority.

Meanwhile missionaries from the Eastern Roman Empire Christianized almost all the Ethiopians, Nubians, Armenians, Iberians (that is, Georgians), Goths, and Vandals. Eastern Roman missionaries also converted many Arabs, many subjects of the Persian Empire, and various others in Central Asia, India, and China. Many of the missionaries who made these converts were later considered to be heretics, whether Arians, Nestorians, or Monophysites; but most of the Arians and Monophysites went on their missions at times when their doctrines were recognized as orthodox by the Eastern Roman government. Most of the Christian communities created at this time survive today, if often as minorities[12].

Though these Christians outside imperial territory were not technically Romans, because they were not subjects of the emperor, they could serve Roman interests. The Christian Ethiopians and Arabs often attacked the Persians and other Roman enemies as allies of the Roman emperor. The Christian Armenians and Iberians, even when they were subject to Persian rule, occasionally plotted to drive out the Persians with Roman

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[10] See Warren T. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 96-102 (on Priscus), 89-96 (on Olympiodorus), and 107-114 (on Zosimus).

[11] See Agathias, "The Histories", *Agathiae Myrinaei Historiarum Libri Quinque*, ed. Rudolf Keydell (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1967), vol. 2, 30.3-31.9.

[12] The most recent treatment of all Byzantine missions known to me at the time of writing this paper was Ihor Ševčenko, "Religious Missions Seen from Byzantium", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 12/13 (1988-89): 7-27, who observed (7, footnote 1), "The full story of Byzantine religious missions is still to be written". The most comprehensive treatment still appears to be in Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, 7 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937-45), 1:171-238 (on missions from Constantine I to 500) and 2:223-262 (on Byzantine missions after 500). After completing this paper, I learned of (without having yet seen) Sergei Arkad'evich Ivanov's *Vizantiiskoe missionerstvo: Mozhno li sdelat' iz "varvara" khristianina?* (Moscow, 2003), which appears to be a welcome study of this important and neglected topic.

help, and sometimes temporarily succeeded. The Persian kings often suspected Mesopotamian and Persian Christians of disloyalty to the Persian Empire and loyalty to the Roman Empire, sometimes with reason.

Therefore Roman identity from about 300 to 600 was loosely defined, and, not by coincidence, often expanding. I say "not by coincidence" because loosely defined groups tend by their nature to have capacities for assimilation that more strictly defined groups lack. An obvious modern analogy is the contrast between America's ability to absorb immigrants relatively easily and the difficulty most European countries, including France, Germany, and The Netherlands, are now having in assimilating immigrants. The Roman Empire of Late Antiquity was much more liberal in granting citizenship even than today's America. Unlike America, the Later Roman Empire did not even have a single language spoken by a majority of its inhabitants. Like America, the empire had large religious minorities, if in both the empire and America we count different kinds of Christians as different religious groups.

By the time paganism and Arianism had become very small minorities within the sixth-century empire Monophysitism was so strong in Egypt and Syria that Orthodox Christians cannot have made up much more than two-thirds of the empire's population[13]. And that was probably the highest percentage of the population that had belonged to a single religious group since paganism had fallen below that level in the mid-fourth century. Moreover, around 600 only about a quarter of the empire's people were under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople. The rest were under the pope at Rome or the patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. There were rival Orthodox and Monophysite patriarchs of both Alexandria and Antioch, and even the Orthodox patriarchs and the pope could on occasion show considerable independence from the emperor and the patriarch of Constantinople.

While the emperors were not necessarily happy to be ruling so many pagans, heretics, insubordinate ecclesiastics, and people speaking so many different languages, the empire's diversity did offer certain advantages. Since the empire was already diverse, it could conquer more people with different languages and religions and rule them without needing to change its system of administration. Christian missionaries, after developing their skills at persuasion with pagans and heretics at home, were well equipped to spread Christianity abroad. Since the emperors and missionaries had an inclusive and

[13] The standard treatment of the Monophysites in the empire is W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

open-ended idea of what it could mean to be a "Roman", the emperors were ready to exploit opportunities to conquer foreign lands, and the missionaries were ready to exploit opportunities to convert foreigners.

Because of the empire's diversity at this time, here I have mostly used the word "Roman" rather than "Byzantine" to describe the Eastern Roman Empire in Late Antiquity. Many modern scholars try to avoid calling the Eastern Roman Empire "Byzantine" at least until the last of the Western Roman Empire disappeared in 480. Even in the late sixth century, when most of us are willing to use the term "Byzantine Empire" most of the time, few of us are really comfortable with using the word "Byzantine" for, say, a Moor living in the Atlas Mountains or a Spaniard living in Cartagena, even when such people were under what we would call "Byzantine" rule.

Yet I doubt that the Moor or the Spaniard had much more feeling of being ruled by foreigners than a Copt in Upper Egypt or a Goth in the Crimea did, though both of those were in the eastern part of the empire. Some people in Constantinople even grumbled that the emperor Justinian himself was a foreigner—that is, a "barbarian"—because he came from the Balkans and spoke Greek with a Latin accent[14]. In fact, in Late Antiquity the empire still was not "Byzantine" in the same sense as it was in the ninth century. To put the same idea in different words, a "Byzantine identity" was not yet fully formed.

III

What happened between the sixth century and the ninth century that might have caused a change? Certainly Byzantine history in the seventh and eighth centuries was full of catastrophic events. The Avars, Slavs, and Bulgars overran almost all of the Balkans, leaving the empire only coastal outposts and a scrap of Thrace around Constantinople. First the Persians and then the Arabs conquered Syria and Egypt. Soon afterward the Arabs took Armenia and northwestern Africa. The Visigoths took what was left of Byzantine Spain, and the Lombards took most of what was left of Byzantine Italy.

By the year 800, not much remained of the Byzantine Empire outside Anatolia and Thrace. Otherwise the Byzantines held part of the Crimea, the Greek islands, Greek coastal enclaves around Thessalonica and Athens, a few more ports in Albania, Dalmatia, and the Veneto, the heel and toe of Italy, and Sicily. (Though many modern maps give the Byzantines Corsica and

[14] Procopius, *Secret History*, 14.2-3.

Sardinia and more of Greece, the evidence is strongly against them.) In all, the empire had lost about two-thirds of its territory.

In terms of diversity, the change was even more dramatic. We have already seen that around the year 600 about a third of the empire's population spoke Greek, about two-thirds were Orthodox Christians, and about a quarter were under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople. Two hundred years later, around 800, practically all the empire's people spoke Greek, accepted Orthodox Christianity, and were under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople.

After the Arabs conquered Egypt, Syria, and Armenia, nearly all the empire's Monophysites passed under Arab rule, along with the jurisdictions of the patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. With the loss of imperial possessions in Africa, Spain, and most of the Balkans and Italy, the empire lost almost all of its Latin speakers and most of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the pope. Then, around 733, the Emperor Leo III gave the patriarch of Constantinople jurisdiction over most of the remaining imperial land that had formerly been under papal jurisdiction. Sicily and the few parts of southern Italy still under Byzantine rule had long been largely Greek-speaking. There, and elsewhere in the empire, Greek-speaking refugees from lost territories more or less completed the process of Hellenization. The result was a much more homogeneous empire[15].

In some ways it was also a stronger and more cohesive empire. It was more defensible, because Byzantium had lost those of its possessions that were hardest to defend. What remained was screened either by the sea or by the rugged Taurus Mountains of southwestern Anatolia, or consisted of fortified ports that could be reinforced and supplied by ship. In terms of identity, the smaller Byzantine Empire of the ninth century was much better defined: it was not only overwhelmingly Orthodox Christian in religion and Greek in speech, but a fairly centralized state headed by the emperor and a patriarch of Constantinople usually chosen by the emperor and loyal to him.

Now, I do not mean to say that the Byzantine Empire after the year 800 was no longer capable of military expansion or of missionary activity. The empire had gone through a bad patch, but by 800 it was already

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[15] Mango, *Byzantium*, 24-31, warns against generalizations that during this time the empire had become more "homogeneous" and "Hellenized." While by the word "Hellenized" I mean only the spread of the Greek language (certainly not of ancient Greek culture), I would maintain that the increased dominance of the Greek language and of Orthodox Christianity, neither of which Mango denies, made the empire more (though far from totally) homogeneous.

recovering. Just after 800 the Byzantines reoccupied most of the Greek mainland, which had been occupied by Slavs. Recovery of some of the land taken by the Arabs took longer, but by 900 this was well under way, and by 1050 the Byzantines had retaken most of Armenia and much of northern and coastal Syria. By 1025 the Byzantines also retook most of the Balkans, conquering the whole of the Bulgarian Empire. Together these conquests roughly doubled the extent of Byzantine territory.

As for missionary activity, this was of course the time when the Byzantines converted the Moravians, Bulgarians, Serbs, and Rus' to Orthodox Christianity, which still remains the ancestral faith of Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, I would maintain that the expansionary and missionary activity of the Byzantine Empire after 800 was rather different in character from the expansionary and missionary activity of the Eastern Roman Empire before 600. During the two centuries between 600 and 800 something in the empire's character had changed.

IV

We can begin with wars. Before 600, the empire fought several wars that served no obvious defensive purpose and were not at all necessary. The first war was the successful invasion of Persia in 298 that won some border territory and a protectorate over Armenia; the second war was a failed invasion of Persia in 363 that brought the loss of most of that border territory and Armenia. Justinian's wars between 533 and 561, which conquered northwestern Africa, Italy, and southeastern Spain from the Vandals, Ostrogoths, and Visigoths, were entirely unprovoked, immensely ambitious, and conducted with great persistence. The Byzantines invaded Persia in 591 even though the usurping Persian king had offered to cede three border outposts to Byzantium if it would simply do nothing. The Byzantine emperor Maurice nonetheless chose to mount a full-scale invasion to restore the legitimate Persian king, who had offered to cede Armenia to Byzantium and kept his promise when he was restored.

By contrast, after 800, Byzantium's territorial acquisitions were made either more or less peacefully or primarily for defensive reasons. The Byzantine reoccupation of Slavic-held territory in Thrace and Greece around 800 involved scarcely any fighting, as the Byzantine army moved into sparsely populated border regions without much resistance, followed by Byzantine settlers who soon outnumbered the local Slavs. Later the Byzantines conquered lands on their eastern frontier mainly because they wanted to prevent raiding by the Arabs and the Arabs' allies. The Byzantines

acquired some more land from Armenian princes who ceded or willed it to the empire, and from renegade Muslims who deserted their rulers and converted to Christianity.

These annexations ceased around the year 1050, once the Byzantines had protected themselves against raiding by pushing back their eastern frontier an average of about a hundred miles into Arab territory, and had secured protectorates over some Arab border states. Though by this time the empire was far stronger and richer than the Arab powers across its border, the Byzantines made no serious attempt to reconquer the rest of Syria, Palestine, or Egypt. Though all of these had once been Byzantine, and all still had large Christian populations, perhaps even Christian majorities, the Byzantines seem not to have considered them worth the trouble to conquer.

The largest conquest made by the Byzantines after 800 was a Christian state, the Bulgarian Empire; but the Byzantines seem to have taken Bulgaria almost by accident. They first occupied eastern Bulgaria in 971 only because Prince Sviatoslav of Kiev had already occupied it and was threatening to use it as a base to attack Constantinople. Yet the Byzantines cared so little about eastern Bulgaria that they then let the Bulgarians gradually take it back. The empire only fought the Bulgarians again as a defensive measure, after they started attacking Greece in 985. Even after that, the objective of the Byzantine emperor Basil II appears to have been not to conquer Bulgaria but to make it accept a Byzantine protectorate. Though the Bulgarians refused to submit after repeated Byzantine victories, after 1004 Basil gave them a respite of almost ten years. After two more crushing Byzantine victories, in 1015 Basil accepted the Bulgarian emperor John Vladislav's offer to become a Byzantine client. Even after John's offer turned out to be duplicitous, Basil seems still to have been ready to accept a protectorate over Bulgaria rather than conquer it; but in 1019, after still more Byzantine victories and the death of John, John's widow simply surrendered to Basil, who took possession of Bulgaria without having asked for it or apparently having much wanted it[16].

For such reasons I once described even the empire's most extensive conquests after 800 as "defensive or retaliatory efforts that got somewhat out of hand"[17]. Certainly by the year 1000 the empire had the resources to conquer

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[16] See Treadgold, *History*, 520-533. My interpretation differs somewhat from that of other scholars, who tend to assume that Basil must have wanted to conquer Bulgaria.

[17] See Warren T. Treadgold, "Byzantium, the Reluctant Warrior", in *Noble Ideals and Bloody Realities: Warfare in the Middle Ages, 378-1492*, ed. Niall Christie

much more than it actually did. When Basil II died in 1025, he had not even bothered to collect the empire's land and household taxes for two years, and he still left a record surplus in the treasury that amounted to about two and a half years' total revenue. The empire's army had about a quarter of a million men – so many that Basil's successors had trouble figuring out what to do with them. The successors generally avoided making more conquests and neglected the army. This restraint proved catastrophic when Anatolia was overrun by the Turks after the Battle of Manzikert in 1071[18].

As for Byzantine missionary activity, after 800 it showed a marked contrast not only to Eastern Roman missions before 600 but to Western European missions throughout the Middle Ages[19]. Western missionaries and early Eastern Roman missionaries proselytized in many directions, even in lands where the rulers were hostile to them and martyred some of them; but the Byzantines after 800 were far less interested in dispatching missionaries. The Byzantines sent the famous mission of Cyril and Methodius to Moravia only at the invitation of its prince, and after a few years lost interest in their mission altogether. The Byzantines made no effort to evangelize the pagan Bulgarians until the Bulgarians agreed to accept missionaries from the Franks. Only then, for reasons that were clearly political, did the Byzantines insist that if the Bulgarians wanted Christianity they had to get it from Byzantine missionaries. Otherwise the Byzantines would seemingly have been content to let the Bulgarians remain pagans.

As with the Moravians, the Byzantines sent missionaries to the Serbs only at the Serbs' request. The conversion of the Rus' was only the incidental

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and Maya Yazigi (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 209-233 (quotation from 219) [Study 20 in this book].

[18] See Warren T. Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army, 284-1081* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 214-219, where I differ from most other scholars, who if they explain the Turks' success at all tend to emphasize Turkish strengths rather than the weakness of the Byzantine army.

[19] Cf. Latourette, *History*, 2:224: "In contrast with what superficially might have been expected, Christianity spread less widely from [Byzantium] than it did from the politically disorganized West". Latourette, one of few scholars to address this problem, advances four possible explanations (2:224-226): fewer promising lands to evangelize, the spread of Islam, "the close association of Eastern Christianity with the state", and "the smaller place which Christianity had in the life of the eastern as compared with the western section of Europe". The first two explanations seem to me correct (if, as he says, "obvious"); though I disagree with his formulations of the latter two, he does seem to have in mind something resembling what I mean by a Byzantine identity.

result of a political alliance made in 988. When Basil II appealed to Vladimir of Kiev for help in a Byzantine civil war, Vladimir agreed only in return for the hand of Basil's sister; and Basil reluctantly agreed only on condition that Vladimir convert to Christianity. Basil's main concern seems to have been to avoid having his sister marry a pagan, and apparently he would rather not have married her to Vladimir at all. The conversion of the Rus' seems to have been of very little interest to Basil.

In this attitude Basil was apparently typical of most Byzantines of this period, who seem not to have cared much about the conversion of the Moravians, the Rus', or any other people. As Ihor Ševčenko has remarked,

> Not a single line of Greek contemporary sources, [which are] relatively plentiful, refers to the Slavic or to the more numerous non-Slavic activities of [Cyril and Methodius]. When we reflect on this we should not be surprised that roughly contemporary Byzantine sources, less plentiful for the end of the tenth century than they are for the ninth, do not mention the baptism of Volodimir [Vladimir]; they devote only a miserable couple of lines to the baptism's circumstances[20].

Thus the conversions that many modern scholars rank among the most momentous achievements of the Byzantines seemed to the Byzantines themselves to be hardly worth mentioning.

The Byzantines did send some missionaries to convert Muslims in the lands the empire conquered in the East; but the main reason was evidently that the emperors wanted to avoid ruling Muslims, because the conquered Muslims were given the choice of leaving for Muslim-ruled territory if they wanted to keep their religion. In fact, the main reason the Byzantines stopped conquering Arab territory roughly where they did was probably that they were trying to avoid the effort of converting any substantial number of Muslims to Christianity. After 800 the empire conquered only territories that were already mostly or entirely Christian, like Bulgaria and Armenia, or could quickly and easily be Christianized, like the relatively small and already largely Christian borderlands in northern Syria[21].

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[20] Ševčenko, "Religious Missions", 13.

[21] See my remarks in Treadgold, *History*, 538-539.

In Byzantium, unlike Western Europe, most missions and conquests were directed by a single central government[22]. This was only natural, since the Byzantine government, like the Roman government before it, had unique powers and advantages when it conducted military and missionary activities, while the medieval West, the special role of the Papacy notwithstanding, had no comparable centralized power. Given the government's advantages in power, influence, and centralized decision-making, we might logically expect that the Byzantine Empire, like the earlier Roman Empire, would have spread its religion and culture more widely than Western Europeans did. Yet the Western Europeans made far more converts: the remaining pagans within formerly imperial territory, the Germans who were still pagan, and the Irish, British, Scandinavians, Balts, and Finns – along with more of the Slavs than the Byzantines did. Just as the Byzantines could easily have made more conquests, they could easily have sent out more missions; but they evidently did not care.

V

What had changed between 600 and 800 to make the Byzantines so much more reluctant to engage in aggressive warfare or missionary activity? I suggest that we call it the formation of a Byzantine identity. After enemy conquests had left Byzantium overwhelmingly Greek-speaking and Orthodox Christian, the Greek language and Orthodox Christianity became defining features of what it meant to be a "Roman" (that is, a Byzantine). Such had not really been the case when the empire included many pagans, heretics, and people who spoke languages other than Greek.

Byzantium remained willing to conquer whatever territories made existing Byzantine territory more secure and could be Hellenized and Christianized more or less quickly and easily, like Crete or the interior of Greece. If some people insisted on surrendering or bequeathing other lands to the emperor, he was ready to accept them provided their inhabitants were Christian, even if they spoke Armenian or Bulgarian. Yet he would not actively seek to acquire such territories. The Byzantines were even reluctant to accommodate the slightly different religious doctrines and practices of their Armenian subjects, who occupied a vital section of the frontier and came to

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[22] The "political motives" of the Byzantine missions are particularly emphasized by Christian Hannick, "Die byzantinischen Missionen", in *Kirchengeschichte als Missionsgeschichte II.1: Die Kirche des früheren Mittelalters*, ed. Knut Schäferdiek, (Munich: Kaiser, 1978), 279-359, especially 354-358.

make up a large part of the Byzantine army[23]. Lands full of Muslims or heretics, like the mostly Muslim and Monophysite interior of Syria, were too much trouble to take into the empire.

The reason for this reluctance to expand or to send missions was certainly not a lack of self-confidence, as the Byzantine attitude toward missionaries makes clear. The Byzantines considered their state, culture, and religion superior to anyone else's. They thought it natural that some Christians would seek annexation to the empire, and that some pagans would seek conversion to Byzantine Christianity. If you asked for missionaries or for annexation, the Byzantines would graciously grant your request. If you were too obtuse to ask, the Byzantines left you alone. The only exception was the conversion of Bulgaria, when it wanted to accept Frankish missionaries as part of an alliance that might well have damaged Byzantine interests.

This new sense of Byzantine identity after 800 could be a source of weakness, but it could also be a source of strength. It made Byzantium less able to hold territories that were not Christianized or Hellenized, but it made Byzantium better able to hold territories that were. On the debit side, when large numbers of Turks migrated into the Anatolian plateau after 1071, the Byzantine government was unwilling to assimilate them and never tried to reconquer the plateau; the Byzantines only reconquered the coastal parts of Anatolia, where few Turks had settled[24]. In the later twelfth century, when the Serbs and Bulgarians threw off Byzantine rule, the Byzantines made only feeble efforts to recover their lost lands. In the cases of the Anatolian plateau and Serbia and Bulgaria, Byzantine power was reduced along with Byzantine territory, and the empire failed to recover its losses when it probably could have.

On the other hand, after the forces of the Fourth Crusade conquered Constantinople in 1204 and seemed to be poised to conquer the whole empire, Byzantine identity became the basis for a Byzantine recovery. At first that recovery was complicated because three different successor states laid claim to popular loyalty on the basis of Byzantine identity. Though modern scholars

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[23] See most recently Nina Garsoïan, "The Problem of Armenian Integration into the Byzantine Empire", in *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, ed. Hélène Ahrweiler and Angeliki Laiou (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection; Cambridge, MA: distributed by Harvard University Press, 1998), 53-124.

[24] Admittedly, another factor was that Alexius I feared that reestablishing Byzantine magnates on the plateau might threaten his own power; see Treadgold, *History*, 671-672.

call them the empires of Nicaea, Trebizond, and Thessalonica, all three claimed to be the Roman (that is, Byzantine) Empire. Yet the Empire of Nicaea soon made its claim good to be the real successor of Byzantium, and was greatly assisted by being the only successor state that ventured to name its own patriarch of Constantinople, who had long been a key symbol of Byzantine identity.

The inhabitants of what had been the Byzantine Empire soon began to rally round this empire and patriarchate in exile. Persistent rebels against the Venetians in Crete professed their loyalty to the emperor of Nicaea. When John III of Nicaea advanced from Anatolia into Europe, he found troops all over formerly Byzantine territory who were ready to surrender to him, abandoning their allegiance not just to the Crusaders but to the emperors of Bulgaria and Thessalonica. The restored Byzantine Empire that retook Constantinople in 1261 enjoyed a measure of loyalty wherever most of the population spoke Greek. For a time the restored empire recovered most of these Greek-speaking lands, and its subjects' allegiance allowed it to outlast the Crusader states and to hold out much longer against the Turks than anyone could reasonably have expected.

After the conversion of the eastern Slavs, the Byzantine identity that had formed by the year 800 came to have both a narrower and a wider meaning. Byzantine identity had two main elements, the Greek language and Orthodox Christianity, and two main leaders, the Byzantine emperor and the patriarch of Constantinople. In the strictest sense, this Byzantine identity included only Orthodox Christians who spoke Greek and were subject to both the emperor and the patriarch. Yet Orthodox Christians who had received their faith from the Eastern empire, especially those who sided with the patriarch in disputes with the pope, could claim at least a secondary Byzantine identity, even if they spoke other languages than Greek and were not ruled by the emperor. This wider group of Orthodox Christians was what Dimitri Obolensky has not inappropriately named "the Byzantine Commonwealth"[25].

Around 1050 the people with this secondary Byzantine identity included only the Rus', the Georgians, and Orthodox Christians under Arab rule. The Armenians, Bulgarians, and Serbs, even if the Byzantines tended to look down on them, could still be considered Byzantines in a stricter sense, because they were actually ruled by the emperor[26]. Soon, however, the

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[25] See Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500-1453* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971).

[26] On Byzantine attitudes toward Bulgarians, Serbs, and others, see now Hélène Ahrweiler, "Byzantine Concepts of the Foreigner: The Case of the Nomads",

Armenians, Bulgarians, and Serbs passed outside Byzantine rule; some other independent Orthodox states, primarily the Romanian principalities, had never been subject to Byzantium. All of these nonetheless recognized the authority of the Byzantine patriarchate, though their respect for the Byzantine emperor waned as imperial power shrank into insignificance.

Of course, after 1453 nobody was ruled by the Byzantine emperor any longer, though the Patriarchate of Constantinople survived under Ottoman rule. We might say that then nobody was a Byzantine any more. Yet until the early twentieth century Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians under Ottoman rule still called themselves *Roméi*, "Romans", the word that up to 1453 we translate as "Byzantines". Such Christians ceased to call themselves *Roméi* and began to call themselves *Éllines* ("Greeks") only with the exchange of populations in 1923 between Greece and Turkey, which left Turkey with only a small minority of Greek-speaking Christians[27]. Yet that small minority still includes the patriarch of Constantinople, and the Christians under his immediate jurisdiction.

Now, I would not argue that a "Byzantine identity" survives today. Quite a lot of history has happened since 1453, and most Eastern Europeans are not direct descendants of the Byzantines anyway. We should therefore not expect to find Eastern Europeans in the modern period behaving like Byzantines in every respect, or even in most respects. For example, a reluctance to annex new territory has not been a notable characteristic of modern Russia[28]. On the other hand, Byzantine influence may well be part of the reason that today's Eastern Orthodox Church puts less emphasis on missionary activity than Protestant and Catholic churches do. Obviously many elements of a Byzantine identity live on in Eastern Christianity and in

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Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire, ed. Hélène Ahrweiler and Angeliki Laiou, (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection; [Cambridge, MA]: distributed by Harvard University Press 1998), 1-16.

[27] On the 1923 exchange of populations, see Bruce Clark, *Twice a Stranger: The Mass Expulsion that Forged Modern Greece and Turkey* (London: Granta Books, 2006), a book with significant implications for modern Greek identity.

[28] It is, however, interesting that the Soviet Union, which was after all supposed to be not just an expanded Russia but a universal Communist state, avoided annexing as constituent republics the satellites it gained after World War II. One reason was probably that annexing them would have reduced Russians to a minority in the Soviet Union, potentially diluting its essentially Russian identity so much as to endanger central control. There may be an analogy to Byzantium here.

the culture of today's Greece and Eastern Europe. These elements extend beyond the subject of this paper, but not beyond the subject of this volume[29].

[29] [Here I refer to the volume in which this paper originally appeared, *Culture and Identity in Eastern Christian History*, ed. Russell E. Martin and Jennifer B. Spock (*Ohio Slavic Papers* 9; Slavica Publishers, Bloomington, 2009).]

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